

Sri Ramakrishna gradually came back to the plane of normal consciousness. He took his seat and chanted the names of God : "Om Satchidananda ! Govinda ! Govinda ! Govinda ! Yogamaya ! Bhagavata—Bhakta—Bhagavan !"

The Master took dust from the place where the kirtan had been sung and touched it to his forehead.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the semicircular porch facing the Ganges, the devotees sitting by his side. Now and then the Master would exclaim, "Ah, Krishnachaitanya !"

MASTER (to Vijay and the others) : "There has been much chanting of the Lord's name in the room. That is why the atmosphere has become so intense."

BHAVANATH : "Words of renunciation, too."

The Master said, "Ah, how thrilling !" Then he sang about Gauranga and Nityananda :

Gora bestows the Nectar of prema ;  
Jar after jar he pours it out,  
And still there is no end !  
Sweetest Nitai is summoning all ;  
Beloved Gora bids them come ;  
Shantipur is almost drowned,  
And Nadia<sup>10</sup> is flooded with prema !

MASTER (to Vijay and the others) : "The musician sang rightly : 'A sannyasi must not look at a woman.' This is the sannyasi's dharma. What a lofty ideal !"

VIJAY : "Yes indeed, sir."

MASTER : "Others learn from the sannyasi's example. That is why such strict rules are prescribed for him. A sannyasi must not look even at the portrait of a woman. What a strict rule ! The slaughtering of a black goat is prescribed for the worship of the Divine Mother ; but a goat with even a slight wound cannot be offered. A sannyasi must not only not have intercourse with woman ; he must not even talk to her."

VIJAY : "Young Haridas talked with a pious woman. For that reason Chaitanya banished him from his presence."

MASTER : "A sannyasi associated with 'woman and gold' is like a beautiful damsel with a bad odour. The odour makes her beauty useless."

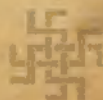
"Once a Marwari devotee wanted to give me some money. Mathur wanted to deed me some land. But I couldn't accept either."

"The rules for the life of a sannyasi are very strict indeed. If a man takes the garb of a sannyasi, he must act exactly like one. Haven't you noticed in the theatre that the man who takes the part of the king acts like a king, and the man who takes the part of a minister acts like a minister ?

"But on attaining the state of the paramahansa one becomes like a child. A child five years old doesn't know the difference between a man and a woman. But even a paramahansa must be careful, so as not to set a bad example to others."

<sup>9</sup> One of the names of Gauranga.

<sup>10</sup> Shantipur and Nadia are places associated with Chaitanya.



Referring to Keshab's association with "woman and gold", which had hindered his work as a spiritual teacher, Sri Ramakrishna said to Vijay, "He—do you understand?"

VIJAY : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "He couldn't achieve very much because he wanted to satisfy both God and the world."

VIJAY : "Chaitanya said to Nityananda : 'Nitai, I shall not be able to do the people any good unless I renounce the world. All will imitate me and want to lead the life of a householder. No one will try to direct his whole mind to the Lotus Feet of God, renouncing "woman and gold".'"

MASTER : "Yes. Chaitanyadeva renounced the world to set an example to mankind."

"The sannyasi must renounce 'woman and gold' for his own welfare. Even if he is unattached, and consequently not in danger, still, in order to set an example to others, he must not keep 'woman and gold' near him. The sannyasi, the man of renunciation, is a world teacher. It is his example that awakens the spiritual consciousness of men."

It was nearly dusk. The devotees saluted the Master and took their leave.





## XXIII

### FESTIVAL AT SURENDRA'S HOUSE

Sunday, June 15, 1884

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA arrived in the morning at the garden house of Surendra, one of his beloved householder disciples, in the village of Kankurgachi near Calcutta. Surendra had invited him and a large number of the devotees to a religious festival.

Occasions like this were a source of great happiness and rejoicing to the Master's devotees. He was then seen at his best. He joined with the others in devotional music and in chanting the names of God, frequently going into ecstasy. He poured out his entire soul in inspired talk, explaining the various phases of God-Consciousness. The impressions of such a festival lingered in the minds of all for many days.

The devotees stood in rows inside the big hall of the garden house to hear the music sung by the professional singers. The floor of the room was covered with a carpet over which was spread a white sheet ; a few bolsters, pillows, and cushions lay here and there.

The musicians were singing of the episodes in the life of Sri Krishna especially associated with His divine love for the gopis of Vrindavan. This was a theme which always appealed to the Master and would throw him into ecstatic moods.

Krishna? God Incarnate, lived the years of His boyhood in Vrindavan as a cowherd. He tended His cows on the green meadows along the bank of the Jamuna and played His flute. The milkmaids could not resist the force of His divine attraction. At the sound of His flute they would leave their household duties and go to the bank of the sacred river. Their love for Krishna destroyed their attachment to worldly things. Neither the threats of their relatives nor the criticism of others could make them desist from seeking the company of Krishna. In the love of the gopis for Krishna there was not the slightest trace of worldliness. It was the innate attraction of God for pure souls, as of the magnet for iron. The author of the *Bhagavata* has compared this love to the all-consuming love of a woman for her beloved. Before the onrush of that love all barriers between man and God are swept away. The devotee surrenders himself completely to his Divine Beloved and in the end becomes one with Him.

Radha was the foremost of the gopis, and Krishna's chief playmate. She felt an indescribable longing for union with Him. A moment's separation from Krishna would rend her heart and soul. During many a moonlit night Krishna would dance with Radha and the gopis in the sacred groves of Vrindavan, and on such occasions the gopis would experience the highest religious ecstasy. At the age of eleven Krishna was called to be the king of Mathura. He left the gopis, promising them, however, His divine vision whenever they concentrated on Him in their hearts.

For centuries and centuries the lovers of God in India have been worshipping the Divine by recreating in themselves the yearning of the gopis for Krishna. Many of the folk-songs of India have as their theme this sweet episode of Krishna's life. Sri Chaitanya revived this phase of Hindu religious life by his spiritual practice and his divine visions. In his ecstatic music Chaitanya assumed the role of Radha and manifested the longing to be united with Krishna. For a long period Sri Ramakrishna also worshipped God as his beloved Krishna, looking on himself as one of the gopis or as God's handmaid.

At Surendra's garden house the kirtan had begun early in the morning. The musicians were singing about the love of Krishna and Radha for each other. The Master was frequently in samadhi. The room was crowded with devotees, among them Bhavanath, Niranjan, Rakhai, Surendra, Ram, and M., and many members of the Brahmo Samaj.

In accordance with the custom, the kirtan had begun with an introductory song about Gauranga. Gauranga embraces monastic life. He is being consumed with longing for a vision of Krishna. He leaves Navadvip and goes away as a wandering monk to seek out his Beloved. His devotees, unable to bear the pangs of separation, weep bitterly and beg Gauranga to return.

The musician sang :

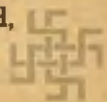
O Gaur, come back to Nadia !

Next the musician sang about the anguish of Radha at her separation from Krishna. When Sri Ramakrishna heard the song he suddenly stood up. Assuming the mood of Radha, he sang in a voice laden with sorrow, improvising the words : " O friend, either bring my beloved Krishna here or take me to Him." Thus singing, he completely lost himself in Radha and could not continue the song. He became speechless, his body motionless, his eyes half closed, his mind totally unconscious of the outer world. He was in deep samadhi.

After a long time he regained normal consciousness and said in the same heart-rending voice : " O friend, take me to my beloved Krishna and make me your bonds slave. I shall be your handmaid for ever. O friend, it was you who taught me how to love Krishna. O Krishna ! O Beloved of my soul ! "

The professional musicians continued their song. They took the part of Radha and sang as if she were talking to her friend : " O friend, I shall not go again to the Jamuna to draw water. Once I beheld my beloved Friend under the kadamba tree. Whenever I pass it I am overwhelmed."

The Master again became abstracted. Heaving a deep sigh he said, " Ah me ! Ah me ! "





The song went on. Radha says :

Even the desire for Krishna's presence  
Has cooled and refreshed my feverish body.

Now and then the musicians improvised lines to the music, continuing in the attitude of Radha : "O friends, you can wait. Show me Krishna, my Beloved." Again : "Do not bother about my ornaments. I have lost my most precious Ornament." And again : "Alas ! I have fallen on evil days. My happy days are over." And finally : "This unhappy time lingers so long !"

Sri Ramakrishna improvised a line himself : "Are not better times yet in sight for me ?" The musicians then improvised : "Such a long time has passed ! Are not better times yet in sight for me ?"

The musicians sang Radha's words to a friend :

O friend, I am dying ! Surely I die,  
The anguish of being kept apart  
From Krishna is more than I can bear.  
Alas ! to whom then shall I leave  
My priceless Treasure ?<sup>1</sup> When I am dead,  
I beg you, do not burn my body ;  
Do not cast it into the river.  
See that it is not given to the flames ;  
Do not cast it into the water.  
In this body I played with Krishna.

Bind my lifeless form, I beg you,  
To the black tamala's branches ;  
Tie it to the tamala tree.  
Touching tamala it touches black.  
Krishna is black, and black is tamala ;  
Black is the colour that I love.  
From earliest childhood I have loved it.  
To the black Krishna my body belongs ;  
Let it not lie apart from black !

Radha reaches her last extremity. She faints away.

Radha has fallen to the ground ;  
She lies there lost to outward sense,  
Repeating her precious Krishna's name,  
And straightway closes both her eyes.  
Ah, has the drama reached its end ?  
What ails you, O delight of Krishna ?  
Only a moment ago you spoke.

Her friends, anointing Radha's form  
With cool and soothing sandal-paste,  
Attempt to bring her back to earth.  
Some of them weep in bitter grief ;  
They cannot bear to see her die.  
Some sprinkle water on her face ;

<sup>1</sup> Krishna.



Perhaps she will revive again !  
 But, oh, can water give back life  
 To one who dies of Krishna's love ?

Radha's friends chant Krishna's sweet name in her ears. This brings her back to partial consciousness. She looks at the black tamala tree and thinks that Krishna stands before her.

Krishna's name restores her life ;  
 Once more her two eyes gaze around,  
 But Krishna's face she cannot see.  
 Alas, how bitterly she weeps !  
 "Where is my Krishna ? Where is He  
 Whose name you chanted in my ears ?  
 Bring Him but once before me here !"

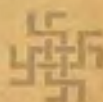
Seeing the black tamala tree,  
 She stares at it and cries aloud :  
 "There is His crest ! I see it clearly !  
 There is my Krishna's lovely crest !"  
 But only a peacock did she see,  
 Whose glistening feathers she mistook  
 For the gay feather on Krishna's crest.

Krishna has gone to Mathura to assume His royal duties. He has discarded His cowherd's dress and flute and put on the royal regalia. Radha's friends, after a hurried consultation, send a gopi to Mathura as messenger. She meets a woman of that city, of her own age, who asks her where she comes from.

Radha's friend says : "I don't have to call Krishna. He Himself will come to me." But none the less she follows the woman of Mathura and goes to Krishna's palace. In the street she weeps, overcome with grief, and prays to Krishna : "O Hari, where are You ? O Life of the gopis ! O Enchanter of our hearts ! O Beloved of Radha ! O Hari, Remover of Your devotees' shame ! Come to us once more ! With great pride I said to the people of Mathura that You Yourself would come to me. Please do not humiliate me."

In scorn says the woman of Mathura :  
 "Oh, you are only a simple milkmaid !  
 How can you go to see our King,  
 Our Krishna, in your beggar's rags ?  
 Behind seven doors His chamber stands.  
 You cannot enter. How can you go ?  
 I die of shame to see your boldness.  
 Tell me, how will you manage to enter ?"

Says the gopi : "Krishna ! Beloved !  
 Soul of the gopis ! Oh, where are You ?  
 Come to me here and save my life,  
 Where are You, adorable Soul of the gopis ?  
 Come to me, Lord of Mathura !  
 And save the life of Your sorrowing handmaid.  
 Ah, where are You, Beloved of Radha ?  
 Lord of our hearts and Friend of our souls !





O Hari, Destroyer of our shame !  
 O priceless Treasure of the gopis !  
 Come to Your handmaid and save her honour."

Thus the messenger weeps and cries out for Krishna.

When the musicians sang, "Where are You, adorable Soul of the gopis ?" the Master went into samadhi. As the music neared its end the musicians sang louder. Sri Ramakrishna was on his feet, again in deep samadhi. Regaining partial consciousness, he said in a half articulate voice, "Kitna ! Kitna !" He was too much overwhelmed to utter Krishna's name distinctly.

The kirtan was coming to a close. At the reunion of Radha and Krishna the Master sang with the musicians, composing the lines himself :

Behold, there Radha stands by Krishna ;  
 On His bosom she reclines.  
 Behold her standing at His left,  
 Like a golden creeper twining  
 Round a black tamala tree !

As the music came to a close the Master led the chorus. All chanted together to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals : "Victory to Radha and Krishna ! Hallowed be the names of Radha and Krishna !" The devotees felt a surge of divine emotion and danced around the Master. He too danced in an ecstasy of joy. The names of God echoed and re-echoed in the house and garden.

After the music the Master sat with the devotees. Just then Niranjan arrived and prostrated himself before him. At the very sight of this beloved disciple the Master stood up, with beaming eyes and smiling face, and said : "You have come too ! (To M.) You see, this boy is absolutely guileless. One cannot be guileless without a great deal of spiritual discipline in previous births. A hypocritical and calculating mind can never attain God.

"Don't you see that God incarnates Himself only in a family where innocence exists ? How guileless Dasaratha was ! So was Nanda, Krishna's father. There is a saying : 'Ah, how innocent a man he is ! He is just like Nanda.'

(To Niranjan) "I feel as if a dark veil has covered your face. It is because you have accepted a job in an office. One must keep accounts there. Besides, one must attend to many other things, and that always keeps the mind in a state of worry. You are serving in an office like other worldly people ; but there is a slight difference, in that you are earning money for the sake of your mother. One must show the highest respect to one's mother, for she is the very embodiment of the Blissful Mother of the Universe. If you had accepted the job for the sake of wife and children, I should have said : 'Fie upon you ! Shame ! A thousand shames !'

(To Mani Mallick, pointing to Niranjan) "Look at this boy. He is absolutely guileless. But he has one fault : he is slightly untruthful nowadays. The other day he said that he would visit me again very soon, but he didn't come. (To Niranjan) That is why Rakhal asked you why you didn't come to see me while you were at Ariadaha, so near Dakshineswar."

NIRANJAN : " I was there only a couple of days."

MASTER (*to Niranjan pointing to M.*) " He is the headmaster of a school. At my bidding he went to see you. (*To M.*) Did you send Baburam to me the other day ? "

The Master went to an adjoining room and began to talk with some devotees there.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " Ah ! How wonderful was the yearning of the gopis for Krishna ! They were seized with divine madness at the very sight of the black tamala tree. Separation from Krishna created such a fire of anguish in Radha's heart that it dried up even the tears in her eyes ! Her tears would disappear in steam. There were other times when nobody could notice the depth of her feeling. People do not notice the plunge of an elephant in a big lake."

M : " Yes, sir, that is true. Chaitanya, too, experienced a similar feeling. He mistook a forest for the sacred grove of Vrindavan, and the dark water of the ocean for the blue Jamuna."

MASTER : " Ah ! If anyone has but a particle of such prema ! What yearning ! What love ! Radha possessed not only one hundred per cent of divine love, but one hundred and twenty-five per cent. This is what it means to be intoxicated with ecstatic love of God. The sum and substance of the whole matter is that a man must love God, must be restless for Him. It doesn't matter whether you believe in God with form or in God without form. You may or may not believe that God incarnates Himself as man. But you will realize Him if you have that yearning. Then He Himself will let you know what He is like. If you must be mad, why should you be mad for the things of the world ? If you must be mad, be mad for God alone."

Presently Sri Ramakrishna returned to the main hall of the house. A big pillow was placed near him for his use. Before touching it he said, " Om Tat Sat." <sup>2</sup> Perhaps the pillow had been used by many worldly people, and that was why he purified it in this way. Bhavanath, M., and other devotees sat near him. It was getting late, but there was no indication that the meal was going to be served. The Master became impatient, like a child, and said : " I don't see any sign of food. What's the matter ? Where is Narendra ? "

A DEVOTEE (*with a smile*) : " Sir, Ram Babu is the manager of the feast. He is superintending everything."

MASTER (*laughing*) : " Oh, Ram is the manager ! Then we know what to expect."

A DEVOTEE : " Things like this always happen when he is the supervisor." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " Where is Surendra ? What a nice disposition he has now ! He is very outspoken ; he isn't afraid to speak the truth. He is unstinting in his liberality. No one that goes to him for help comes away empty-handed. (*To M.*) You went to Bhagavan Das.<sup>3</sup> What sort of man is he ? "

<sup>2</sup> A sacred formula of the Hindu religion, meaning, " The Lord is the only Reality."

<sup>3</sup> A great Vaishnava devotee.



M: "He is very old now. I saw him at Kalna. It was night. He lay on a carpet and a devotee fed him with food that had been offered to God. He can hear only if one speaks loudly into his ear. Hearing me mention your name he said, 'You have nothing to worry about.'"

BHAVANATH (to M.): "You haven't been to Dakshineswar for a long time. The Master asked me about you and said one day, 'Has M. lost all taste for this place?'"

Bhavanath laughed as he said these words. The Master heard their conversation and said to M. in a loving voice: "Yes, that is true. Why haven't you been to Dakshineswar for such a long time?" M. could only stammer some lame excuses.

Just then Mahimacharan arrived. He lived at Cossipore near Calcutta. Mahimacharan held the Master in great respect and was a frequent visitor at the temple garden. He was a man of independent means, having inherited some ancestral property. He devoted his time to religious thought and to the study of the scriptures. He was a man of some scholarship, having studied many books, both Sanskrit and English.

MASTER (to Mahima): "What is this? I see a steamship here. (All Laugh.) We expect here a small boat at the most, but a real steamship has arrived. But then I know. It's the rainy season!" (Laughter.)

The Master was conversing with Mahimacharan. He asked him: "Isn't feeding people a kind of service to God? God exists in all beings as fire. To feed people is to offer oblations to that Indwelling Spirit. But then one shouldn't feed the wicked, I mean people who are entangled in gross worldliness or who have committed heinous crimes like adultery. Even the ground where such people sit becomes impure to a depth of seven cubits. Once Hriday fed a number of people at his native place. A good many of them were wicked. I said to Hriday: 'Look here. If you feed such people I shall leave your house at once.' (To Mahima) I hear that you used to feed people; but now you don't give any such feasts. Is it because your expenses have gone up?" (Laughter.)

The meal was to be served on the south verandah of the house. Leaf-plates were being placed on the floor. The Master said to Mahimacharan: "Please go there and see what they are doing. You may help them a little in serving the food. But I shouldn't ask you." Mahimacharan said: "Let them bring in the food. I shall see." Hemming and hawing, he went toward the kitchen, but presently he came back.

Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees enjoyed the meal greatly. Afterwards he rested awhile. About two o'clock in the afternoon Pratap Chandra Mazumdar of the Brahmo Samaj arrived. He was a co-worker of Keshab Chandra Sen and had been to Europe and America in connection with the Brahmo missionary work. He greeted Sri Ramakrishna, and the Master, too, bowed before him with his usual modesty. They were soon engaged in conversation.

PRATAP: "I have been to Darjeeling recently for a change of air."

MASTER: "But your health hasn't much improved. What are you suffering from?"

PRATAP : "The same illness that Keshab died of."

They began to talk about Keshab. Pratap said : "Even in boyhood he showed non-attachment to worldly things, seldom making merry with other boys. He was a student in the Hindu College. At that time he became friendly with Satyendra and through him made the acquaintance of his father, Devendranath Tagore. Keshab cultivated bhakti and at the same time practised meditation. At times he would be so much overcome with divine love that he would become unconscious. The main purpose of his life was to introduce religion among householders."

The conversation next turned to a certain Mahratta lady.

PRATAP : "Some women of our country have been to England. This Mahratta lady, who is very scholarly, also visited England. Later she embraced Christianity. Have you heard her name, sir ?"

MASTER : "No. But from what you say it seems to me that she has a desire for name and fame. That kind of egotism is not good. The feeling 'I am the doer' is the outcome of ignorance. But the feeling that God does everything is due to knowledge. God alone is the Doer ; all others are instruments in his hands."

"The misfortune that befalls a man on account of his egotism can be realized if you only think of the condition of the calf. The calf says, 'Hamma ! Hamma !', that is, 'I ! I !' And just look at its misfortune ! At times it is yoked to the plough and made to work in the field from sunup to sundown, rain or shine. Again, it may be slaughtered by the butcher. In that case the flesh is eaten and the skin tanned into hide. From the hide shoes are made. People put on these shoes and walk on the rough ground. Still that is not the end of its misfortunes. Drums are made from its skin and mercilessly beaten with sticks. At last its entrails are made into strings for the bow used in carding cotton. When used by the carder the string gives the sound 'Tuhu ! Tuhu !', 'Thou ! Thou !'—that is, 'It is Thou, O Lord ! It is Thou !' It no longer says, 'Hamma ! Hamma !', 'I ! I !' Only then does the calf's trouble come to an end, and it is liberated. It doesn't return to the world of action."

"Likewise, when the embodied soul says : 'O God, I am not the doer ; Thou art the Doer. I am the machine and Thou art its Operator', only then does its suffering of worldly life come to an end ; only then does it obtain liberation. It no longer has to be reborn in this world of action."

A DEVOTEE : "How can a man get rid of his ego ?"

MASTER : "You cannot get rid of it until you have realized God. If you find a person free from ego, then know for certain that he has seen God."

DEVOTEE : "What, sir, are the signs of God-vision ?"

MASTER : "Yes, there are such signs. It is said in the *Bhagavata* that a man who, has seen God behaves sometimes like a child, sometimes like a ghou, sometimes like an inert thing, and sometimes like a madman."

"The man who has seen God becomes like a child. He is beyond the three gunas ; he is unattached to any of them. He behaves like a ghou, for he maintains the same attitude toward things holy and unholy. Again, like a madman, he sometimes laughs and sometimes weeps. Now he dresses



himself like a dandy and the next moment he goes entirely naked and roams about with his cloth under his arm. Therefore he seems to be a lunatic, Again, at times he sits motionless like an inert thing."

DEVOTEE : "Does the ego disappear altogether after the realization of God ?"

MASTER : "Yes, sometimes God totally effaces the ego of His devotee, as in the state of samadhi. But in many cases He keeps a trace of ego. But that doesn't injure any body. It is like the ego of a child. A five-year-old child no doubt says 'I', but that ego doesn't harm anybody. At the touch of the philosopher's stone, steel is turned into gold ; the steel sword becomes a sword of gold. The gold sword has the form of a sword, no doubt, but it cannot injure anybody. One cannot cut anything with a gold sword.

(To Pratap) "You have been to England. Tell us what you saw there."

PRATAP : "The English people worship what you call 'gold'. Of course, there are also some good people in England, those who live an unattached life. But generally one finds there a great display of rajas in everything. I saw the same thing in America."

MASTER (to Pratap) : "It is not in England alone that one sees attachment to worldly things. You see it everywhere. But remember that work is only the first step in spiritual life. God cannot be realized without sattva—love, discrimination, kindness, and so on. It is the very nature of rajas to involve a man in many worldly activities. That is why rajas degenerates into tamas. If a man is entangled in too many activities he surely forgets God. He becomes more and more attached to 'woman and gold'.

"But it is not possible for you to give up work altogether. Your very nature will lead you to it whether you like it or not. Therefore the scriptures ask you to work in a detached spirit, that is to say, not to crave the work's results. For example, you may perform devotions and worship, and practise austerities, but your aim is not to earn people's recognition or to increase your merit.

"To work in such a spirit of detachment is known as karmayoga. But it is very difficult. We are living in the Kaliyuga, when one easily becomes attached to one's actions. You may think you are working in a detached spirit, but attachment creeps into the mind from nobody knows where. You may worship in the temple or arrange a grand religious festival or feed many poor and starving people. You may think you have done all this without hankering after the results. But unknown to yourself the desire for name and fame has somehow crept into your mind. Complete detachment from the results of action is possible only for one who has seen God."

A DEVOTEE : "Then what is the way for those who have not seen God ? Must they give up all the duties of the world ?"

MASTER : "The best path for this age is bhaktiyoga, the path of bhakti prescribed by Narada : to sing the name and glories of God and pray to Him with a longing heart, 'O God, give me knowledge, give me devotion, and reveal Thyself to me !' The path of karma is extremely difficult. Therefore one should pray : 'O God, make my duties fewer and fewer ; and may I,

through Thy grace, do the few duties that Thou givest me without any attachment to their results ! May I have no desire to be involved in many activities !

"It is not possible to give up work altogether. Even to think or to meditate is a kind of work. As you develop love for God, your worldly activities become fewer and fewer of themselves. And you lose all interest in them. Can one who has tasted a drink made of sugar candy enjoy a drink made of ordinary molasses ?"

A DEVOTEE : "The English people always exhort us to be active. Isn't action the aim of life then ?"

MASTER : "The aim of life is the attainment of God. Work is only a preliminary step ; it can never be the end. Even unselfish work is only a means ; it is not the end.

"Sambhu Mallick once said to me, 'Please bless me, sir, that I may spend all my money for good purposes, such as building hospitals and dispensaries, making roads, and digging wells.' I said to him : 'It will be good if you can do these things in a spirit of detachment. But that is very difficult. Whatever you may do, you must always remember that the aim of this life of yours is the attainment of God and not the building of hospitals and dispensaries. Suppose God appeared before you and said to you, "Accept a boon from Me." Would you then ask Him, "O God, build me some hospitals and dispensaries" ? Or would you not rather pray to Him : "O God, may I have pure love at Your Lotus Feet ! May I have Your uninterrupted vision !" ? Hospitals, dispensaries, and all such things are unreal. God alone is real and all else unreal. Furthermore, after realizing God one feels that He alone is the Doer and we are but His instruments. Then why should we forget Him and destroy ourselves by being involved in too many activities ? After realizing Him, one may, through His grace, become His instrument in building many hospitals and dispensaries."

"Therefore I say again that work is only the first step. It can never be the goal of life. Devote yourself to spiritual practice and go forward. Through practice you will advance more and more in the path of God. At last you will come to know that God alone is real and all else is illusory, and that the goal of life is the attainment of God.

"Once upon a time a wood-cutter went into a forest to chop wood. There suddenly he met a brahmachari. The holy man said to him, 'My good man, go forward.' On returning home the wood-cutter asked himself, 'Why did the brahmachari tell me to go forward ?' Some time passed. One day he remembered the brahmachari's words. He said to himself, 'Today I shall go deeper into the forest.' Going deep into the forest, he discovered innumerable sandal-wood trees. He was very happy and returned with cart-loads of sandal-wood. He sold them in the market and became very rich.

"A few days later he again remembered the words of the holy man to go forward. He went deeper into the forest and discovered a silver-mine near a river. This was even beyond his dreams. He dug out silver from the mine and sold it in the market. He got so much money that he didn't even know how much he had.



"A few more days passed. One day he thought : 'The brahmachari didn't ask me to stop at the silver-mine ; he told me to go forward.' This time he went to the other side of the river and found a gold-mine. Then he exclaimed : 'Ah, just see ! This is why he asked me to go forward.'"

"Again, a few days afterwards, he went still deeper into the forest and found heaps of diamonds and other precious gems. He took these also and became as rich as the god of wealth himself.

"Therefore I say that, whatever you may do, you will find better and better things if only you go forward. You may feel a little ecstasy as the result of japa, but don't conclude from this that you have achieved everything in spiritual life. Work is by no means the goal of life. Go forward, and then you will be able to perform unselfish work. But again I say that it is most difficult to perform unselfish work. Therefore with love and longing in your heart pray to God : 'O God, grant me devotion at Thy Lotus Feet and reduce my worldly duties. Please grant me the boon that the few duties I must do may be done in a detached spirit.' If you go still farther you will realize God. You will see Him. In time you will converse with Him."

Next the conversation turned to the quarrels among the members of the Brahmo Samaj. They had had a misunderstanding about the right to preach in the temple after Keshab's death.

MASTER (to Pratap) : "I hear that some members of the Samaj have quarrelled with you about the altar. But they are most insignificant persons—mere nobodies.

(To the devotees) : "People like Pratap and Amrita are like good conch-shells, which give out a loud sound. And the rest, about whom you hear so much, don't give out any sound at all." (All laugh.)

PRATAP : "Speaking of sounds, even such a worthless thing as a mango-stone makes a sound !"

MASTER (to Pratap) : "One can very well understand the inner feeling of a teacher of your Brahmo Samaj by hearing his preaching. Once I went to a meeting of a Hari Sabha. The preacher of the day was a pundit named Samadhyayi. And can you imagine what he said ? He said in the course of his sermon : 'God is dry. We must make Him sweet and fresh with our love and devotion.' I was stunned to hear these words. Then I was reminded of a story. A boy once said : 'At my uncle's house there are many horses. Oh, yes ! His whole cow-shed is full of them.' Now if it was really a cow-shed, then horses could not be kept there. Possibly he had only cows. What did people think on hearing such an incoherent statement ? They believed that there were surely no such animals as horses in the shed." (Laughter.)

A DEVOTEE : "True, sir, there were not only no horses, but possibly there were also no cows !" (Laughter.)

MASTER : "Just fancy, to describe God, who is of the very nature of Love and Bliss, as dry ! It only proves that the man has never experienced what God is like.

<sup>1</sup> The split stone of a mango, about to sprout, makes a sound when one blows through it.

(*To Pratap*) "Let me tell you something. You are a learned and intelligent and serious-minded soul. Keshab and you were like the two brothers, Gaur and Nitai. You have had enough of lectures, arguments, quarrels, discussions, and dissensions. Can such things interest you any more? Now gather your whole mind and direct it to God. Plunge deep into God."

PRATAP: "Yes, sir, you are right. That is surely my only duty now. But I am doing all these things only to perpetuate Keshab's name."

MASTER (*with a smile*): "No doubt you say now that you are doing all this to keep his name alive; but in a few days you won't feel that way. Listen to a story. A man had built a house on a hill. It was only a mud hut, but he had built it with great labour. A few days after, there came a violent storm and the hut began to rock. The man became very anxious to save it and prayed to the god of the winds, 'O god of the winds, please don't wreck the house!' But the god of the winds paid no heed to his prayer. The house was about to crash. Then he thought of a trick. He remembered that Hanuman was the son of the god of the winds. At once he cried out with great earnestness: 'O revered sir, please don't pull down the house. It belongs to Hanuman. I beseech you to protect it.' But still the house continued to shake violently. Nobody seemed to listen to his prayer. He repeated many times, 'Oh, this house belongs to Hanuman!' But the fury of the wind did not abate. Then he remembered that Hanuman was the devoted servant of Rama, whose younger brother was Lakshmana. Desperately the man prayed, crying aloud, 'Oh, this house belongs to Lakshmana!' But that also failed to help matters. So the man cried out as a last resort: 'This is Rama's house. Don't break it down, O god of the winds! I beseech you most humbly.' But this too proved futile, and the house began to crash down. Whereupon the man, who now had to save his own life, rushed out of it with the curse: 'Let it go! This is the devil's own hut!'

(*To Pratap*): "You don't have to perpetuate Keshab's name. Remember that he achieved all his success through the will of God. Through the divine will his work was established, and through the divine will it is disintegrating. What can you do about it? Now it is your bounden duty to give your entire mind to God, to plunge deep into the Ocean of His Love."

Saying these words the Master sang in his sweet voice:

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love.

Go seek, O mind, go seek Vrindavan in your heart,  
Where with His loving devotees  
Sri Krishna sports eternally.

Light up, O mind, light up true wisdom's shining lamp,  
And let it burn with steady flame  
Unceasingly within your heart.

Who is it that steers your boat across the solid earth?  
It is your guru, says Kubir;  
Meditate on his holy feet.



The Master continued, addressing Pratap : " Did you listen to the song ? You have had enough of lectures and quarrels. Now dive deep into the Ocean of God. There is no fear of death from plunging into this Ocean, for this is the Ocean of Immortality. Don't think that this will make you lose your head. Never for a moment harbour the idea that by thinking too much of God one becomes insane. Once I said to Narendra—"

PRATAP : " Who is Narendra, sir ? "

MASTER : " Oh, never mind. There is a young man of that name. I said to Narendra : ' Look here, my boy. God is the Ocean of Bliss. Don't you want to plunge into this Ocean ? Suppose there is a cup of syrup and you are a fly. Where will you sit to sip the syrup ? ' Narendra said, ' I will sit on the edge of the cup and stick my head out to drink it. ' ' Why ? ' said I. ' Why should you sit on the edge ? ' He replied, ' If I go far into the syrup, I shall be drowned and lose my life. ' Then I said to him : " But, my child, there is no such fear in the Ocean of Satchidananda. It is the Ocean of Immortality. By plunging into it a man does not die ; he becomes immortal. Man does not lose his consciousness by being mad about God.

(To the devotees) " The feeling of ' I ' and ' mine ' is ignorance. People say that Rani Rasmani built the Kali temple ; but nobody says it was the work of God. They say that such and such a person established the Brahmo Samaj ; but nobody says it was founded through the will of God. This feeling, ' I am the doer ', is ignorance. On the contrary, the idea, ' O God, Thou art the Doer and I am only an instrument ; Thou art the Operator and I am the machine ', is Knowledge. After attaining Knowledge a man says : ' O God, nothing belongs to me—neither this house of worship nor this Kali temple nor this Brahmo Samaj. These are all Thine. Wife, son, and family do not belong to me. They are all Thine. '

" To love these objects, regarding them as one's own, is maya. But to love all things is daya, compassion. To love only the members of the Brahmo Samaj or of one's own family is maya ; to love one's own countrymen is maya. But to love the people of all countries, to love the members of all religions, is daya. Such love comes from love of God, from daya.

" Maya entangles a man and turns him away from God. But through daya one realizes God. Sages like Sukadeva and Narada always cherished daya in their hearts."

PRATAP : " Revered sir, are those who live with you making progress in spiritual life ? "

MASTER : " I tell people that there is nothing wrong in the life of the world. But they must live in the world as a maidservant lives in her master's house. Referring to her master's house, she says, ' That is our house. ' But her real home is perhaps in a far-away village. Pointing out her master's house to others, she says, no doubt, ' This is our house ', but in her heart she knows very well that it doesn't belong to her and that her own house is in a far-away village. She brings up her master's son and says, ' My Hari has grown very naughty ', or ' My Hari doesn't like sweets. ' Though she repeats, ' My Hari '

with her lips, yet she knows in her heart that Hari doesn't belong to her, that he is her master's son.

"Thus I say to those who visit me : ' Why don't you live in the world ? There is no harm in that. But always keep your mind on God. Know for certain that house, family, and property are not yours. They are God's. Your real home is in God.' Also I ask them to pray always with a longing heart for love of God's Lotus Feet."

Again the conversation turned to the English people. A devotee said, "Sir, I understand that nowadays the pundits of England do not believe in the existence of God."

PRATAP : " However they may talk, I don't believe that any of them is a real atheist. Many of them have had to admit that there is a great power behind the activities of the universe."

MASTER : " Well, that is enough. They believe in Sakti, don't they ? Then why should they be atheists ? "

PRATAP : " They also believe in the moral government of the universe."

Pratap was now about to take leave of the Master.

MASTER (to Pratap) : " What more shall I say to you ? My only request is that you do not involve yourself in quarrels and dissensions any more. Another thing. It is ' woman and gold ' that keeps men away from God. That is the barrier. Don't you find that everyone has nothing but praise for his own wife ? (All laugh.) A wife may be good or bad ; but if you ask her husband about her he will always say, ' Oh, she is very good—' "

At this point Pratap bade the Master good-bye. He did not wait to hear the end of Sri Ramakrishna's words about the renunciation of " woman and gold ". Those burning words touched the hearts of the devotees and were carried away on the wind through the gently rustling leaves in the garden.

A few minutes later Mani Mallick said to Sri Ramakrishna : " Sir, it is time for you to leave for Dakshineswar. Today Keshab's mother and the other ladies of his family are going to the temple garden to visit you. They will be hurt if they do not find you there."

Keshab had passed away only a few months before. His old mother and his other relatives wanted to visit the Master.

MASTER (to Mani Mallick) : " Don't hurry me, please. I didn't sleep well. I can't rush. They are going to Dakshineswar. What am I to do about it ? They will stroll in the garden and enjoy it thoroughly."

After resting a little the Master was ready to leave for Dakshineswar. He was thinking of Surendra's welfare. He visited the different rooms, softly chanting the holy name of God. Suddenly he stood still and said : " I didn't eat any luchi at meal-time. Bring me a little now." He ate only a crumb and said : " There is much meaning in my asking for the luchi. If I should remember that I hadn't eaten any at Surendra's house, then I should want to come back for it." (All laugh.)

MANI MALLICK : " That would have been nice. Then we too should have come with you."

The devotees laughed.



Friday, June 20, 1884

It was dusk. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room, absorbed in contemplation of the Divine Mother. Now and then he was chanting Her name. Rakhal, Adhar, M., and several other devotees were with him.

After a while the evening worship began in the temples. Adhar left the room to see the worship. Sri Ramakrishna and M. conversed.

MASTER: "Tell me, does Baburam intend to continue his studies? I said to him, 'Continue your studies to set an example to others.' After Sita had been set free, Bibhishana refused to become king of Ceylon. Rama said to him: 'You should become king to open the eyes of the ignorant. Otherwise they will ask you what you have gained as a result of serving Me. They will be pleased to see you acquire the kingdom.'

"I noticed the other day that Baburam, Bhavanath, and Harish have a feminine nature. In a vision I saw Baburam as a goddess with a necklace around her neck and with woman companions about her. He has received something in a dream. His body is pure. Only a very little effort will awaken his spiritual consciousness.

"You see, I am having some difficulty about my physical needs. It will be nice if Baburam lives with me. The nature of these attendants of mine is undergoing a change. Latu is always tense with spiritual emotion. He is about to merge himself in God. Rakhal is getting into such a spiritual mood that he can't do anything even for himself. I have to get water for him. He isn't of much service to me.

"Among the youngsters Baburam and Niranjan are rather exceptional. If other boys come in the future, they will, it seems to me, receive instruction and then go away.

"But I don't want Baburam to tear himself away from his family. It may make trouble at home. (*Smiling*) When I ask him, 'Why don't you come?' he says, 'Why not make me come?'. He looks at Rakhal and weeps. He says, 'Rakhal is very happy here.'

"Rakhal now lives here as one of the family. I know that he will never again be attached to the world. He says that worldly enjoyments have become tasteless to him. His wife came here on her way to Konnagar. She is fourteen. He too was asked to go to Konnagar, but he didn't go. He said, 'I don't like merriment and gaiety.'

"What do you think of Niranjan?"

M: "He is very handsome."

MASTER: "No, I am not asking about his looks. He is guileless. One can easily realize God if one is free from guile. Spiritual instruction produces quick results in a guileless heart. Such a heart is like well cultivated land from which all the stones have been removed. No sooner is the seed sown than it germinates. The fruit also appears quickly.

"Niranjan will not marry. It is 'woman and gold' that causes entanglement. Isn't that so?"

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "What will one gain by renouncing betel-leaf and tobacco ? The real renunciation is the renunciation of 'woman and gold'."

"I came to know in an ecstatic mood that, though Niranjana had accepted a job in an office, he would not be stained by it. He is earning money for his mother. There is no harm in that."

"The work you are doing won't injure you either. What you are doing is good. Suppose a clerk is sent to jail ; he is shut up there and chained, and at last he is released. Does he cut capers after his release ? Of course not. He works again as a clerk. It is not your intention to accumulate money. You only want to support your family. Otherwise, where will they go ?"

M : "I shall be relieved if someone takes charge of them."

MASTER : "That is true. But now do 'this' as well as 'that'."

M : "It is great luck to be able to renounce everything."

MASTER : "That is true. But people act according to their inherent tendencies. You have a few more duties to perform. After these are over you will have peace. Then you will be released. A man cannot easily get out of the hospital once his name is registered there. He is discharged only when he is completely cured."

"The devotees who come here may be divided into two groups. One group says, 'O God, give me liberation.' Another group, belonging to the inner circle, doesn't talk that way. They are satisfied if they can know two things : first, who I<sup>6</sup> am ; second, who they are and what their relationship to me is. You belong to this second group ; otherwise . . ."

"Bhavanath, Baburam, and a few others have a feminine nature. Harish sleeps in a woman's cloth. Baburam says that he too likes the womanly attitude. So I am right. Bhavanath also is like that. But Narendra, Rakhal, and Niranjana have a masculine nature."

"Please tell me one thing. What is the significance of my having hurt my arm ? Once my teeth were broken while I was in a state of ecstasy. It is the arm this time."

Seeing M. silent, the Master himself continued the conversation.

MASTER : "My arm was broken in order to destroy my ego to its very root. Now I cannot find my ego within myself any more. When I search for it I see God alone. One can never attain God without completely getting rid of the ego. You must have noticed that the chatak bird has its nest on the ground but soars up very high."

"Captain says I haven't acquired any occult powers because I eat fish. I tremble with fear lest I should acquire those powers. If I should have them, then this place would be turned into a hospital or a dispensary. People would flock here and ask me to cure their illness. Is it good to have occult powers ?"

M : "No, sir. You have said to us that a man cannot realize God if he possesses even one of the eight occult powers."

MASTER : "Right you are. Only the small-minded seek them. If one asks something of a rich man, one no longer receives any favour from him."

<sup>5</sup> That is to say, both worldly duty and spiritual practice.

<sup>6</sup> Referring to himself.



The rich man doesn't allow such a person to ride in the same carriage with him. Even if he does, he doesn't allow the man to sit near him. Therefore love without any selfish motive is best.

"God with form and the formless God are both equally true. What do you say? One cannot keep one's mind on the formless God a long time. That is why God assumes form for His devotees.

"Captain makes a nice remark in this connexion. He says that when a bird gets tired of soaring very high it perches on a tree and rests. First is the formless God, and then comes God with form.

"I shall have to go to your house once. I saw in a vision that the houses of Adhar, Balaram, and Surendra were so many places for our forgathering. But it makes no difference to me whether they come here or not."

M: "That's right. Why shouldn't it be so? One must feel misery if one feels happiness. But you are beyond both."

MASTER: "Yes. Further, I think of the magician and his magic. The magician alone is real. His magic is illusory, like a dream. I realized this when I heard the *Chandi* recited. Sumbha and Nisumbha<sup>7</sup> were scarcely born when I learnt that they both were dead."

M: "Yes, sir. Once I was going to Kalna with Gangadhar in a steamer. A country boat struck our ship and sank with twenty or twenty-five passengers. They all disappeared in the water, like foam churned up by the steamer.

"May I ask you one thing? Does a man watching magic really feel compassion when he sees suffering in the performance? Does he feel, at that time, any sense of responsibility? One thinks of compassion only when one feels responsibility. Isn't that so?"

MASTER: "A jnani sees everything at once—God, maya, the universe, and living beings. He sees that vidyamaya, avidyamaya, the universe, and all living beings exist and at the same time do not exist. As long as he is conscious of 'I' he is conscious of 'others' too. Nothing whatsoever exists after he cuts through the whole thing with the sword of jnana. Then even his 'I' becomes as unreal as the magic of the magician."

M, was, reflecting on these words, when the Master said: "Do you know what it is like? It is as if there were a flower with twenty-five layers of petals, and you cut them all with one stroke.

"The idea of responsibility! Goodness gracious! Men like Sankaracharya and Sukadeva kept the 'ego of Knowledge'. It is not for man to show compassion, but for God. One feels compassion as long as one has the 'ego of Knowledge'. And it is God Himself who has become the 'ego of Knowledge'.

"You may feel a thousand times that it is all magic; but you are still under the control of the Divine Mother. You cannot escape Her. You are not free. You must do what She makes you do. A man attains Brahmajnana only when it is given to him by the Adyasakti, the Divine Mother. Then alone does he see the whole thing as magic; otherwise not.

<sup>7</sup> Two demons mentioned in the *Chandi*, who were killed by the Divine Mother.

"As long as the slightest trace of ego remains, one lives within the jurisdiction of the Adyasakti. One is under Her sway. One cannot go beyond Her.

"With the help of the Adyasakti, God sports as an Incarnation. God, through His Sakti, incarnates Himself as man. Then alone does it become possible for the Incarnation to carry on His work. Everything is due to the Sakti of the Divine Mother.

"When anyone asked the former manager of the temple garden a great favour, the manager would say, 'Come after two or three days.' He must ask the proprietor's permission.

"God will incarnate Himself as Kalki at the end of the Kaliyuga. He will be born as the son of a brahmin. Suddenly and unexpectedly a sword and horse will come to him. . . ."

Adhar returned to the Master's room after watching the evening worship in the temples.

MASTER (*to Adhar and the others*): "Bhuvan was here and brought me twenty-five Bombay mangoes and some sweets. She said to me, 'Will you eat a mango?' I said, 'My stomach is heavy today.' And to tell you the truth, I am feeling uncomfortable after eating a few of the sweets."

Bhuvanmohini was a nurse who used to visit Sri Ramakrishna now and then. The Master could not eat the food offerings of everyone, especially of physicians and nurses. It was because they accepted money from the sick in spite of the suffering of these people.

MASTER: "Keshab Sen's mother, sisters, and other relatives came here; so I had to dance a little. I had to entertain them. What else could I do? They were so grief-stricken!"



## XXIV

### PUNDIT SHASHADHAR

*Wednesday, June 25, 1884*

**I**T WAS THE DAY of the Rathayatra, the Car Festival of the Hindus. At Ishan's invitation Sri Ramakrishna went to his house in Calcutta. For some time the Master had had a desire to meet Pundit Shashadhar Tarkachudamani, who had been staying with one of Ishan's neighbours. So it was decided that he would visit the pundit in the afternoon.

A few devotees, including Hazra, accompanied the Master to Ishan's house. Ishan had invited one or two brahmin scholars and a devotee who followed the Tantrik method of worship. Shrish and Ishan's other sons were also present.

The Master noticed that the Tantrik worshipper had a vermilion mark on his forehead, and smilingly said, "I see he is branded."

After a while M. and Narendra arrived and bowed before Sri Ramakrishna. The Master had previously informed M. that he would be at Ishan's house.

The Master joked about the delay in serving their meal. One of the scholars quoted a Sanskrit verse about the anxiety created in people's minds by the pangs of hunger. Proceeding to explain the verse he said: "The study of philosophy is indeed edifying, but poetry is more fascinating than philosophy. People listening to good poems think of the study of philosophy—Vedanta, Nyaya, Samkhya, and so forth—as dry and insipid. Again, music is more attractive than poetry. Music melts even a heart of stone. But a beautiful woman has an even greater attraction for a man's heart than music. Such a woman, passing by, diverts a man's attention from both poetry and music. But when a man feels the pangs of hunger, everything else—poetry, music, and woman—appears as of no consequence. Thus hunger is the most arresting thing."

The Master remarked with a smile, "The pundit is witty."

Soon Narendra began to sing. A few moments later the Master went upstairs for a little rest. M. and Shrish accompanied him. M. introduced Shrish to the Master, saying: "He is a scholar and a man of peaceful nature. We were fellow students in our boyhood. Now he is a lawyer."

MASTER: "It is a pity that such a man should practise law."

M : " Yes, sir. It was a mistake on his part."

MASTER : " I know a few lawyers. One of them shows me great respect. He is a straightforward man. (*To Shrish*) What is your idea about the most essential thing in life ?"

SHRISH : " God exists and He alone does everything. But the attributes we ascribe to Him are not the right ones. How can a man conceive of Him ? His nature is infinite."

MASTER : " What need is there of your counting the number of trees and branches in an orchard ? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Do that and be happy. The aim of human birth is to love God. Realize that love and be at peace."

" Suppose you have entered a tavern for a drink. Is it necessary for you to know how many gallons of wine there are in the tavern ? One glass is enough for you. What need is there of your knowing the infinite qualities of God ? You may discriminate for millions of years about God's attributes and still you will not know them."

The Master remained silent a few minutes. A brahmin pundit came into the room.

MASTER (*To M.*) : " There is no substance whatsoever in the worldly life. The members of Ishan's family are good ; so he has some peace here. Suppose his sons had been lewd, disobedient, and addicted to drink and other vices. Then there would have been no end to his troubles. One very seldom comes across such a religious family, in which all the members are devoted to God. I have seen only two or three such families. Generally one finds quarrels, misunderstanding, jealousy, and friction. Besides, there are disease, grief, and poverty in the world. Seeing this condition, I prayed to the Divine Mother, ' O Mother, turn my mind at once from the world to God.'

" Look at Narendra's troubles. His father is dead and the members of his family are starving. He has been trying his utmost to secure a position, but he has not yet found one. Just see how unsettled his mind is !

(*To M.*) " You used to come to Dakshineswar very frequently. But why have you become such a rare visitor ? Perhaps you have become particularly friendly with your wife. Is it true ? Why should I blame you ? The influence of ' woman and gold ' is everywhere. Therefore I pray, ' O Divine Mother, please don't make me a worldly man if I am to be born again in a human body.' "

BRAHMIN SCHOLAR : " Why should you say that, sir ? The scriptures extol the life of a householder."

MASTER : " Yes, that is true. But it is very difficult to lead the true life of a householder. (*To M.*) How wrong of us ! They are singing, especially Narendra, and we have left the room."

About four o'clock in the afternoon the Master left in a carriage for the house where Pundit Shashadhar was staying. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna got into the carriage he went into samadhi. His physical frame was very tender as a result of the austerities he had undergone during the long years of his spiritual discipline and his constant absorption in God-Consciousness.

The Master would suffer from the slightest physical discomfort and even from the vibration of worldly thoughts around him. Once Keshab Chandra Sen had said that Sri Ramakrishna, Christ, and Sri Chaitanya belonged to a delicate species of humanity that should be kept in a glass case and protected from the vulgar contact of the world.

It was the rainy season, and a fine drizzle of rain had made the road muddy. The sky was overcast. The devotees followed the carriage on foot. As the carriage stopped in front of the house, the host and his relatives welcomed the Master and took him upstairs to the drawing-room. There the Master met the pundit.

Pundit Shashadhar, a man of fair complexion and no longer young, had a string of rudraksha beads around his neck. He was one of the renowned Sanskrit scholars of his time—a pillar of orthodox Hinduism, which had reasserted itself after the first wave of Christianity and Western culture had passed over Hindu society. His clear exposition of the Hindu scriptures, his ringing sincerity, and his stirring eloquence had brought back a large number of the educated young Hindus of Bengal to the religion of their forefathers.

The pundit saluted the Master with reverence. Narendra, Rakhal, Ram, Hazra, and M., who had come with the Master, seated themselves in the room as near the Master as they could, anxious not to miss one of his words.

At the sight of the pundit the Master again went into samadhi. After a while, still remaining in that state, he looked at the pundit and said with a smile, "Very well, very well." Then, addressing the pundit, the Master said, "Tell me how you give lectures."

PUNDIT : "Sir, I try to explain the teachings of the Hindu scriptures."

MASTER : "For the Kaliyuga the path of devotion described by Narada is best. Where can people find time now to perform their duties according to the scriptural injunctions ? Nowadays the decoctions of roots and herbs of the orthodox Hindu physicians cannot be given to a fever patient. By the time that kind of medicine begins its slow process of curing, the patient is done for. Therefore only a drastic medicine like the allopathic 'fever mixture' is effective now. You may ask people to practise scriptural rites and rituals ; but, when prescribing the rituals, remove the 'head and tail'.<sup>1</sup> I tell people not to bother about the elaborate rituals of the sandhya as enjoined in the scriptures. I say that it will be enough for them to repeat the Gayatri alone. If you must give instruction about scriptural ceremonies, do so only to a very few, like Ishan.

"You may deliver thousands of lectures, but they won't make the slightest impression on worldly people. Can one drive a nail into a stone wall ? The point of the nail will sooner break than make a dent in the stone. What will you gain by striking the tough skin of the crocodile with a sword ? The sadhu's water-bowl, made from the shell of a bitter gourd, may visit the four principal holy places of India with its owner, but it will still remain as bitter as ever. Your lectures are not helping worldly people very much ; and you will realize this by and by. The calf cannot stand on its legs all at once. Now it

<sup>1</sup> The non-essential parts. The allusion is to the head and tail of fish, which are non-essential.



drops to the ground and now it stands up. So it learns to stand firmly on its legs and walk.

"You cannot distinguish a lover of God from a worldly person. It isn't your fault, of course. When the first onrush of the gale shakes the trees, it is impossible to distinguish one tree from another—the mango from the tamarind, for instance.

"Without having realized God one cannot give up rituals altogether. How long should one practise the sandhya and other forms of ritualistic worship? As long as one does not shed tears of joy at the name of God and feel a thrill in one's body. You will know that your ritualistic worship has come to an end when your eyes become filled with tears as you repeat 'Om Rama'. Then you do not have to continue your sandhya or other rituals.

"When the fruit appears the blossom drops off. Love of God is the fruit, and rituals are the blossom. When the daughter-in-law of the house becomes pregnant, she cannot do much work. Her mother-in-law gradually lessens her duties in the house. When her time arrives she does practically nothing. And after the child is born her only work is to play with it. She doesn't do any household duties at all. The sandhya merges in the Gayatri, the Gayatri in Om, and Om in samadhi. It is like the sound of a bell: *t—a—m*. The yogi, by following in the trail of the sound Om, gradually merges himself in the Supreme Brahman. His sandhya and other ritualistic duties disappear in samadhi. Thus the duties of the jnani come to an end."

As the Master talked of samadhi, he himself went into that state. His face radiated a heavenly light. Bereft of outer consciousness, he could not utter another word. His gaze was indrawn and transfixed in communion with the Self. After a long time the Master began to recognize the world around him and said, like a child, "I shall have a drink of water." Whenever after samadhi the Master asked for a drink of water, his devotees knew that he was gradually becoming conscious of the outer world.

Still lingering in the state of ecstasy, he said to the Divine Mother: "O Mother, the other day You showed me Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Then I told You that I should like to see another pundit, and so You have brought me here."

Looking at the pundit, he said: "My child, add a little more to your strength. Practise spiritual discipline a few days more. You have hardly set your foot on the tree, yet you expect to lay hold of a big cluster of fruit. But, of course, you are doing all this for the welfare of others." With these words he bowed his head before the pundit.

The Master continued: "When I first heard about you, I inquired whether you were merely erudite or whether you had discrimination and renunciation. A pundit who doesn't know how to discriminate between the Real and the unreal is no pundit at all.

"There is no harm in teaching others if the preacher has a commission from the Lord. Nobody can confound a preacher who teaches people after having received the command of God. Getting a ray of light from the

goddess of learning, a man becomes so powerful that before him big scholars seem mere earthworms.

"When the lamp is lighted the moths come in swarms. They don't have to be invited. In the same way, the preacher who has a commission from God need not invite people to hear him. He doesn't have to announce the time of his lectures. He possesses such irresistible attraction that people come to him of their own accord. People of all classes, even kings and aristocrats, gather around him. They say to him : 'Revered sir, what can we offer you ? Here are mangoes, sweets, money, shawls, and other things. What will you be pleased to accept ?' In that case I say to them : 'Go away. I don't care for these. I don't want anything.'

"Does the magnet say to the iron, 'Come near me' ? That is not necessary. Because of the attraction of the magnet, the iron rushes to it.

"Such a preacher may not be a scholarly person, but don't conclude from that that he has any lack of wisdom. Does book-learning make one wise ? He who has a commission from God never runs short of wisdom. That wisdom comes from God ; it is inexhaustible. At Kamarpukur I have seen people measuring grain. It lies in a heap. One man keeps pushing grain from the heap toward another man, who weighs it on a scales. So the man who weighs doesn't run short of grain. It is the same with the preacher who has received a commission from God. As he teaches people, the Divine Mother Herself supplies him with fresh knowledge from behind. That knowledge never comes to an end.

"Can a preacher ever lack knowledge if but once he is favoured with a benign glance from the Divine Mother ? Therefore I ask you whether you have received any commission from God."

HAZRA : "Oh yes, he must have it. (*To the pundit*) Isn't it true, sir ?"

PUNDIT : "Commission ? No, sir, I am afraid I haven't received any such thing."

HOST : "He may not have received the commission, but he preaches from a sense of duty."

MASTER : "What will a man accomplish by mere lectures without the commission from God ? Once a Brahmo preacher said in the course of his sermon, 'Friends, how much I used to drink !' and so on. Hearing this the people began to whisper among themselves : 'What is this fool saying ? He used to drink !' Now these words produced a very unfavourable effect. This shows that preaching cannot bring a good result unless it comes from a good man.

"A high government official from Barisal once said to me, 'Sir, if you begin the work of preaching, I too shall gird my loins.' I told him the story of people's dirtying the bank of the Haldarpukur and of its being stopped only when a constable, armed with authority from the government, put up a notice prohibiting it.

"So I say, a worthless man may talk his head off preaching, and yet he will produce no effect. But people will listen to him if he is armed with a badge of authority from God. One cannot teach others without the commission

from God. A teacher of men must have great power. There's many a Hanumanpuri<sup>2</sup> in Calcutta. It is with them that you will have to wrestle. (*Pointing to the people assembled there*) These are mere sheep !

"Chaitanyadeva was an Incarnation of God. How little is left of what he accomplished—not to speak of a lecturer who preaches without authority from God ! What good will a lecturer do ?

"Therefore I say to you, dive deep in God-Consciousness."

Saying this, the Master began to sing in an ecstasy of love for God :

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty ;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love. . . .

The Master continued : "One does not die if one sinks in this Ocean. This is the Ocean of Immortality. Once I said to Narendra : 'God is the Ocean of Bliss. Tell me if you want to plunge into It. Just imagine there is some syrup in a cup and that you have become a fly. Now tell me where you will sit to sip the syrup.' Narendra answered : 'I will sit on the edge of the cup and stretch out my neck to drink, because I am sure to die if I go far into the cup.' Then I said to him : 'But my child, this is the Ocean of Satchidananda. There is no fear of death in It. This is the Ocean of Immortality. Only ignorant people say that one should not have an excess of devotion and divine love. How foolish ! Can there be any excess of divine love ?'

(*To the pundit*) "Therefore I say to you, dive into the Ocean of Satchidananda. Nothing will ever worry you if you but realize God. Then you will get His commission to teach people.

"There are innumerable pathways leading to the Ocean of Immortality. The essential thing is to reach the Ocean. It doesn't matter which path you follow. Imagine that there is a reservoir containing the Elixir of Immortality. You will be immortal if a few drops of the Elixir somehow get into your mouth. You may get into the reservoir either by jumping into it, or by being pushed into it from behind, or by slowly walking down the steps. The effect is one and the same. You will become immortal by tasting a drop of that Elixir.

"Innumerable are the ways that lead to God. There are the paths of jnana, of karma, and of bhakti. If you are sincere, you will attain God in the end, whichever path you follow. Roughly speaking, there are three kinds of yoga : jnanayoga, karmayoga, and bhaktiyoga.

"What is jnanayoga ? The jnani seeks to realize Brahman. He discriminates, saying, 'Not this, not this'. He discriminates, saying, 'Brahman is real and the universe illusory.' He discriminates between the Real and the unreal. As he comes to the end of discrimination, he goes into samadhi and attains the Knowledge of Brahman.

"What is karmayoga ? Its aim is to fix one's mind on God by means of work. That is what you are teaching. It consists of breath-control,<sup>3</sup> concentration, meditation, and so on, done in a spirit of detachment. If a householder performs his duties in the world in a spirit of detachment, surrendering

<sup>2</sup> A noted wrestler of the time.

<sup>3</sup> Breathing exercises as prescribed in rajayoga.



the results to God and with devotion to God in his heart, he too may be said to practise karmayoga. Further, if a person performs worship, japa, and other forms of devotion, surrendering the results to God, he may be said to practise karmayoga. Attainment of God alone is the aim of karmayoga.

"What is bhaktiyoga? It is to keep the mind on God by chanting His name and glories. For the Kaliyuga the path of devotion is easiest. This is indeed the path for this age.

"The path of karma is very difficult. First of all, as I have just said, where will one find the time for it nowadays? Where is the time for a man to perform his duties as enjoined in the scriptures? Man's life is short in this age. Further, it is extremely difficult to perform one's duties in a spirit of detachment, without craving the result. One cannot work in such a spirit without first having realized God. Attachment to the result somehow enters the mind, though you may not be aware of it.

"To follow jnanayoga in this age is also very difficult. First, a man's life depends entirely on food. Second, he has a short span of life. Third, he can by no means get rid of body-consciousness; and the Knowledge of Brahman is impossible without the destruction of body-consciousness. The jnani says: 'I am Brahman; I am not the body. I am beyond hunger and thirst, disease and grief, birth and death, pleasure and pain.' How can you be a jnani if you are conscious of disease, grief, pain, pleasure, and the like? A thorn enters your flesh, blood flows from the wound, and you suffer very badly from the pain; but nevertheless if you are a jnani you must be able to say: 'Why, there is no thorn in my flesh at all. Nothing is the matter with me.'

"Therefore bhaktiyoga is prescribed for this age. By following this path one comes to God more easily than by following the others. One can undoubtedly reach God by following the paths of jnana and karma, but they are very difficult paths.

"Bhakti yoga is the religion for this age. But that does not mean that the lover of God will reach one goal and the philosopher and worker another. It means that if a person seeks the Knowledge of Brahman he can attain it by following the path of bhakti, too. God, who loves His devotee, can give him the Knowledge of Brahman if He so desires.

"But the bhakta wants to realize the Personal God endowed with form and talk to Him. He seldom seeks the Knowledge of Brahman. But God, who does everything at His pleasure, can make His devotee the heir to His infinite glories if it pleases Him. He gives His devotee both the Love of God and the Knowledge of Brahman. If one is able somehow to reach Calcutta, one can see the Maidan and the museum and other places too. The thing is how to reach Calcutta.

"By realizing the Divine Mother of the Universe, you will get Knowledge as well as Devotion. You will get both. In bhava samadhi you will see the form of God, and in nirvikalpa samadhi you will realize Brahman, the Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. In nirvikalpa samadhi ego, name, and form do not exist.

"A lover of God prays to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother, I am very much afraid of selfish actions. Such actions have desires behind them, and if I perform them I shall have to reap their fruit. But it is very difficult to work in a detached spirit. I shall certainly forget Thee, O Mother, if I involve myself in selfish actions. Therefore I have no use for them.' May my actions, O Divine Mother, be fewer every day till I attain Thee. May I perform, without attachment to the results, only what action is absolutely necessary for me. May I have great love for Thee as I go on with my few duties. May I not entangle myself in new work so long as I do not realize Thee. But I shall perform it if I receive Thy command. Otherwise not."

PUNDIT : "How far did you go in visiting the sacred places ?"

MASTER : "Oh, I visited a few places. (*With a smile*) But Hazra went farther and also climbed higher. He visited Hrishikesh, but I didn't go so far or so high.

"You must have noticed kites and vultures soaring very high in the sky ; but their eyes are always fixed on the charnel-pits. Do you know the meaning of 'charnel-pits' ? It is 'woman and gold'.

"What is the use of making pilgrimages if you can attain love of God remaining where you are ? I have been to Benares and noticed the same trees there as here. The same green tamarind-leaves !

"Pilgrimage becomes futile if it does not enable you to attain love of God. Love of God is the one essential and necessary thing. Do you know the meaning of 'kites and vultures' ? There are many people who talk big and who say that they have performed most of the duties enjoined in the scriptures. But with all that their minds are engrossed in worldliness and deeply preoccupied with money, riches, name, fame, creature comforts, and such things."

PUNDIT : "It is true, sir. Going on a pilgrimage is like seeking diamonds and gems, while discarding the precious stone that is worn by Narayana Himself on His breast."

MASTER : "I want you to remember this. You may impart thousands of instructions to people, but they will not bear fruit except in proper time. On going to bed, a child said to his mother, 'Mother, please wake me up when I feel the call of nature.' The mother said : 'Don't worry about it, my child. That call will wake you up itself.' (*All laugh.*) One feels yearning for God at the proper time.

"There are three classes of physicians. The physicians of one class feel the patient's pulse and go away, merely prescribing medicine. As they leave the room they simply ask the patient to take the medicine. They are the poorest class of physicians. Likewise, there are teachers who only give instruction, but do not stop to see whether their teachings have produced a good or bad effect. They do not think at all about the disciple.

"There are physicians of another class, who prescribe medicine and ask the patient to take it. If the patient is unwilling to follow their directions, they reason with him. They are the mediocre physicians. Likewise, there are mediocre teachers. They give instruction to the student and, further, try to persuade him in various ways to follow the instruction.

"Lastly, there are the physicians of the highest class. If the patient does not respond to their gentle persuasion, they even exert force upon him. If necessary, they press their knees on the patient's chest and force the medicine down his throat. Likewise, there are teachers of the highest class, who even exert force to direct the mind of the pupil toward God."

PUNDIT : "Sir, if there are such superior teachers as you have described, then why should you say that one does not get the Knowledge of God until the right time comes ?"

MASTER : "You are right. But what will the physician do if the medicine runs out of the patient's mouth and doesn't reach his stomach ? In such a case even the best physician can't do anything."

"The teacher should judge the fitness of the student before giving him instruction. But you don't discriminate in your instruction. When a young man comes to me for instruction, first of all I ask him about his relatives at home. Suppose he has lost his father ; suppose his father has left some debts for him. How can such a person direct his mind to God ? Are you listening to me ?"

PUNDIT : "Yes, sir. I am paying attention to every word."

MASTER : "One day some Sikh soldiers came to the temple garden at Dakshineswar. I met them in front of the Kali temple. One of them referred to God as very compassionate. 'Indeed !' I said. 'Is that true ? But how do you know ?' He answered, 'Because, sir, God gives us food and takes every care of us.' I said : 'Why should that surprise you ? God is the Father of us all. Who will look after the child if the father doesn't ? Do you mean to say that the people of the neighbouring village should look after the child ?'"

NARENDRA : "Then shouldn't we call God kind ?"

MASTER : "Have I forbidden you to ? What I mean is that God is our very own. He is not a stranger to us."

PUNDIT : "Priceless words !"

MASTER (to Narendra) : "I listened to your singing, but I didn't enjoy it. So I left the room. Your mind is now set on seeking a job, and therefore your song sounded dull."

Narendra flushed. He felt ashamed of himself and remained silent.

The Master asked for a drink of water. A glass of water had been placed near him, but he could not take it. He asked for some fresh water. Later it was found that a man of immoral character had touched the first glass.

PUNDIT (to Hazra) : "You live in his company day and night. You must be very happy."

MASTER (with a smile) : "This is indeed a great occasion for me. Today I have seen the crescent moon of the second day of the bright fortnight. (*All laugh.*) Do you know why I referred to the moon of the second day ? Sita once said to Ravana, 'You are the full moon and Rama is the crescent moon of the second day of the bright fortnight.' Ravana did not understand the meaning of these words. He thought Sita was flattering him and became exceedingly happy. But Sita meant that Ravana had reached the fullest limit of his power and prosperity, and that thenceforth he would wane like the full



moon. Rama, on the other hand, was like the moon of the second day. He would wax day by day."

The Master was about to take his leave. The pundit and his friends bowed low before him.

It was not yet dusk, and Sri Ramakrishna returned to Ishan's house with the devotees. The Master took his seat in the drawing-room with Ishan and his sons, a pundit, and a few devotees.

MASTER (*smiling, to Ishan*): "I said to Pundit Shashadhar: 'You have hardly set your foot on the tree, and yet you aspire to lay hold of a big bunch of fruit. First of all practise some spiritual discipline. Then you may teach others.'"

ISHAN: "Every preacher thinks that he enlightens others. The glow-worm also may think that it illumines the world. Imagining this to be the glow-worm's feeling, someone said to it: 'O glow-worm, how can you bring light to the world? You only reveal the intensity of the darkness.'"

MASTER (*with a smile*): "But Shashadhar is not just a scholar. He also has a little discrimination and dispassion."

A pundit who was present said to Sri Ramakrishna, "You are indeed a great soul."

MASTER: "You may say that about sages like Narada, Prahlada, or Sukadeva. I am like your son."

"Of course, in one sense your words are true. It is said that in one respect the devotee of God is greater than God Himself, because he carries God in his heart. (*All rejoice.*) It is said in the Vaishnava books: 'A devotee regards himself as a higher, and God as a lower, being.' Yasoda, the mother of Krishna, was about to fetter Krishna, who was God Incarnate, with chains! She believed that no one but herself could take care of Krishna."

"Sometimes God acts as the magnet and the devotee as the needle. God attracts the devotee to Himself. Again, sometimes the devotee acts as the magnet and God as the needle. Such is the attraction of the devotee that God comes to him, unable to resist his love."

The Master was about to leave for Dakshineswar. Ishan and the other devotees stood around him while he gave Ishan various words of advice.

MASTER: "A devotee who can call on God while living a householder's life is a hero indeed. God thinks: 'He who has renounced the world for My sake will surely pray to Me. He must serve Me. Is there anything very remarkable about it? People will cry shame on him if he fails to do so. But he is blessed indeed who prays to Me in the midst of his worldly duties. He is trying to find Me, overcoming a great obstacle--pushing away, as it were, a huge block of stone weighing a ton. Such a man is a real hero.'"

PUNDIT: "You are right, sir. The scripture says the same thing. There is in the *Mahabharata* the story of the 'pious hunter' and the 'chaste woman.' Once a hermit was disturbed in his meditation by a crow. When he cast an angry glance at the bird, it was reduced to ashes. The hermit said to himself: 'I have destroyed the crow by a mere glance. I must have made great progress in spiritual life.' One day he went to a woman's house to beg his food."

She was devoted to her husband and served him day and night ; she provided him with water to wash his feet and even dried them with her hair. When the hermit knocked at her door for alms, she was serving her husband and could not open the door at once. The hermit, in a fit of anger, began to curse her. The chaste woman answered from the inner apartments : ' I am not your crow. Wait a few minutes, sir. After finishing my service to my husband I shall give you my attention.' The hermit was very much surprised to find that this simple woman was aware of his having burnt the crow to ashes. He wanted her to give him spiritual instruction. At her bidding he went to the ' pious hunter ' at Benares. This hunter sold meat, but he also served his parents day and night as embodiments of God. The hermit said to himself in utter amazement : ' Why, he is a butcher and a worldly man ! How can he give me the Knowledge of Brahman ? ' But the hunter was a knower of Brahman and had acquired divine knowledge through the performance of his worldly duties. The hermit was illumined by the instruction of the ' pious hunter '."

The Master was about to take his leave. He was standing at the door of the next house, where Ishan's father-in-law lived. Ishan and the other devotees stood by the Master. They were waiting to bid him good-bye. Sri Ramakrishna said to Ishan : " Live in the world like an ant. The world contains a mixture of truth and untruth, sugar and sand. Be an ant and take the sugar.

" Again, the world is a mixture of milk and water, the bliss of God-Consciousness and the pleasure of sense-enjoyment. Be a swan and drink the milk, leaving the water aside.

" Live in the world like a waterfowl. The water clings to the bird, but the bird shakes it off. Live in the world like a mudfish. The fish lives in the mud, but its skin is always bright and shiny.

" The world is indeed a mixture of truth and make-believe. Discard the make-believe and take the truth."

Sri Ramakrishna got into the carriage and left for Dakshineswar.

## XXV

### ADVICE TO PUNDIT SHASHADHAR

*Monday, June 30, 1884*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was in his room, sitting on a mat spread on the floor. Pundit Shashadhar and a few devotees were with him on the mat, and the rest sat on the bare floor. Surendra, Baburam, M., Harish, Latu, Hazra, and others were present. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Sri Ramakrishna had met Pundit Shashadhar six days before in Calcutta, and now the pundit had come to Dakshineswar to visit the Master. Bhudar Chattopadhyaya and his elder brother, the pundit's hosts, were with him.

"The pundit was a follower of the path of jnana. The Master was explaining this path to him. He said : "Nitya and Lila are the two aspects of one and the same Reality. He who is the Indivisible Satchidananda has assumed different forms for the sake of His Lila." As he described the nature of the Ultimate Reality the Master every now and then became unconscious in samadhi. While he talked he was intoxicated with spiritual fervour. He said to the pundit : "My dear sir, Brahman is immutable and immovable, like Mount Sumeru. But He who is 'immovable' can also 'move'."

The Master was in ecstasy. He began to sing in his melodious voice :

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ?  
Even the six darsanas are powerless to reveal Her. . . .

He went on :

Is Mother merely a simple woman, born as others are born ?  
Only by chanting Her holy name  
Does Siva survive the deadly poison.<sup>1</sup>

She it is who creates the worlds, She who preserves and destroys,  
With a mere wink of Her wondrous eyes ;  
She holds the universe in Her womb.

Seeking a shelter at Her feet, the gods themselves feel safe ;  
And Mahadeva, God of Gods,  
Lies prostrate underneath Her feet.

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the poison that appeared when the ocean was churned by the gods and demons. Siva drank it out of kindness to others, and the poison remained in His throat, giving it a blue colour. Therefore Siva is known as the "god with a blue throat".



Again he sang :

Is Mother only Siva's wife ? To Her must needs bow down  
The all-destroying King of Death !  
Naked She roams about the world, slaying Her demon foes,  
Or stands erect on Siva's breast.  
Her feet upon Her Husband's form ! What a strange wife She  
makes !  
My Mother's play, declares Prasad, shatters all rules and laws :  
Strive hard for purity, O mind,  
And understand my Mother's ways.

And again :

I drink no ordinary wine, but Wine of Everlasting Bliss,  
As I repeat my Mother Kali's name ;  
It so intoxicates my mind that people take me to be drunk ! . . .

And again :

Can everyone have the vision of Syama ? Is Kali's treasure for  
everyone ?  
Oh, what a pity my foolish mind will not see what is true !  
Even with all His penances, rarely does Siva Himself behold  
The mind-bewitching sight of Mother Syama's crimson feet.  
To him who meditates on Her the riches of heaven are poor indeed ;  
If Syama casts Her glance on him, he swims in eternal Bliss.  
The prince of yogis, the king of the gods, meditate on Her feet in  
vain ;  
Yet worthless Kamalakanta yearns for the Mother's blessed feet !

The Master's ecstatic mood gradually relaxed. He stopped singing and  
sat in silence. After a while he got up and sat on the small couch.

Pundit Shashadhar was charmed with his singing. Very humbly he said  
to Sri Ramakrishna, " Are you going to sing any more ? "

A little later the Master sang again :

High in the heaven of the Mother's feet, my mind was soaring like  
a kite,  
When came a blast of sin's rough wind that drove it swiftly to-  
ward the earth. . . .

Then he sang :

Once for all, this time, I have thoroughly understood ;  
From One<sup>2</sup> who knows it well, I have learnt the secret of bhava.  
A man has come to me from a country where there is no night,  
And now I cannot distinguish day from night any longer ;  
Rituals and devotions have all grown profitless for me.  
My sleep is broken ; how can I slumber any more ?  
For now I am wide awake in the sleeplessness of yoga.  
O Divine Mother, made one with Thee in yoga-sleep<sup>3</sup> at last,  
My slumber I have lulled asleep for evermore.

<sup>2</sup> God, whom the poet worshipped as the Divine Mother.

<sup>3</sup> Samadhi, which makes one appear asleep.

I bow my head, says Prasad, before desire and liberation ;  
Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman,  
I have discarded, once for all, both righteousness and sin.

Sri Ramakrishna continued :

I have surrendered my soul at the fearless feet of the Mother ;  
Am I afraid of Death any more ?  
Unto the tuft of hair on my head  
Is tied the almighty mantra, Mother Kali's name,  
My body I have sold in the market-place of the world  
And with it have bought Sri Durga's name.

As Sri Ramakrishna sang the line, " And with it have bought Sri Durga's name ", the tears flowed from Pundit Shashadhar's eyes. The Master went on with the song :

Deep within my heart I have planted the name of Kali,  
The Wish-fulfilling Tree of heaven ;  
When Yama, King of death, appears,  
To him I shall open my heart and show it growing there,  
I have cast out from me my six unflagging foes ;  
Ready am I to sail life's sea,  
Crying, " To Durga, victory ! "

Again he sang :

Dwell, O mind, within yourself ;  
Enter no other's home.  
If you but seek there, you will find  
All you are searching for. . . .

And again :

Though I<sup>4</sup> am never loath to grant salvation,  
I hesitate indeed to grant pure love.  
Whoever wins pure love surpasses all ;  
He is adored by men ;  
He triumphs over the three worlds. . . .

The pundit had studied the Vedas and the other scriptures. He loved to discuss philosophy. The Master, seated on the couch, cast his benign look on the pundit and gave him counsel through parables.

MASTER (to the pundit) : " There are many scriptures like the Vedas. But one cannot realize God without austerity and spiritual discipline. ' God cannot be found in the six systems, the Vedas, or the Tantra.' "

" But one should learn the contents of the scriptures and then act according to their injunctions. A man lost a letter. He couldn't remember where he had left it. He began to search for it with a lamp. After two or three people had searched, the letter was at last found. The message in the letter was : ' Please send us five seers of sandesh and a piece of wearing-cloth.' The

<sup>4</sup> The six passions.

<sup>5</sup> The song represents Sri Krishna's words.

man read it and then threw the letter away. There was no further need of it ; now all he had to do was to buy the five seers of sandesh and the piece of cloth.

"Better than reading is hearing, and better than hearing is seeing. One understands the scriptures better by hearing them from the lips of the guru or of a holy man. Then one doesn't have to think about their non-essential part. Hanuman said : 'Brother, I don't know much about the phase of the moon or the position of the stars. I just contemplate Rama.'

"But seeing is far better than hearing. Then all doubts disappear. It is true that many things are recorded in the scriptures ; but all these are useless without the direct realization of God, without devotion to His Lotus Feet, without purity of heart. The almanac forecasts the rainfall of the year. But not a drop of water will you get by squeezing the almanac. No, not even one drop.

"How long should one reason about the texts of the scriptures ? So long as one does not have direct realization of God. How long does the bee buzz about ? As long as it is not sitting on a flower. No sooner does it light on a flower and begin to sip honey than it keeps quiet.

"But you must remember another thing. One may talk even after the realization of God. But then one talks only of God and of Divine Bliss. It is like a drunkard's crying, 'Victory to the Divine Mother !' He can hardly say anything else on account of his drunkenness. You can notice, too, that a bee makes an indistinct humming sound after having sipped the honey from a flower.

"The jnani reasons about the world through the process of 'Neti, neti', 'Not this, not this'. Reasoning in this way, he at last comes to a state of Bliss, and that is Brahman. What is the nature of a jnani ? He behaves according to scriptural injunctions.

"Once I was taken to Chanak and saw some sadhus there. Several of them were sewing. (*All laugh.*) At the sight of us they threw aside their sewing. They sat straight, crossing their legs, and conversed with us. (*All laugh.*)

"But jnanis will not talk about spiritual things without being asked. They will inquire, at first, about such things as your health and your family.

"But the nature of the vijnani is different. He is unconcerned about anything. Perhaps he carries his wearing-cloth loose under his arm, like a child ; or perhaps the cloth has dropped from his body altogether.

"The man who knows that God exists is called a jnani. A jnani is like one who knows beyond a doubt that a log of wood contains fire. But a vijnani is he who lights the log, cooks over the fire, and is nourished by the food. The eight fetters have fallen from the vijnani. He may keep merely the appearance of lust, anger, and the rest."

PUNDIT : "The knots of his heart are cut asunder ; all his doubts are destroyed."

MASTER : "Yes. Once a ship sailed into the ocean. Suddenly its iron joints, nails, and screws fell out. The ship was passing a magnetic hill, and so all its iron was loosened.

"I used to go to Krishnakishore's house. Once, when I was there, he said to me, 'Why do you chew betel-leaf ?' I said : 'It is my sweet pleasure.



I shall chew betel-leaf, look at my face in the mirror, and dance naked among a thousand girls.'<sup>6</sup> Krishnakishore's wife scolded him and said: 'What have you said to Ramakrishna? You don't know how to talk to people.'

"In this state, passions like lust and anger are burnt up, though nothing happens to the physical body. It looks just like any other body; but the inside is all hollow and pure."

A DEVOTEE: "Does the body remain even after the realization of God?"

MASTER: "The body survives with some so that they may work out their prarabdha karma or work for the welfare of others. By bathing in the Ganges a man gets rid of his sin and attains liberation. But if he happens to be blind, he doesn't get rid of his blindness. Of course, he escapes future births, which would otherwise be necessary for reaping the results of his past sinful karma. His present body remains alive as long as its momentum<sup>7</sup> is not exhausted; but future births are no longer possible. The wheel moves as long as the impulse that has set it in motion lasts. Then it comes to a stop. In the case of such a person, passions like lust and anger are burnt up. Only the body remains alive to perform a few actions."

PUNDIT: "That is called samskara."

MASTER: "The vijñani always sees God. That is why he is so indifferent about the world. He sees God even with his eyes open. Sometimes he comes down to the Lila from the Nitya, and sometimes he goes up to the Nitya from the Lila."

PUNDIT: "I don't understand that."

MASTER: "The jñani reasons about the world through the process of 'Neti, neti', and at last reaches the Eternal and Indivisible Satchidananda. He reasons in this manner: 'Brahman is not the living beings; it is neither the universe nor the twenty-four cosmic principles.' As a result of such reasoning he attains the Absolute. Then he realizes that it is the Absolute that has become all this—the universe, its living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles."

"Milk sets into curd, and the curd is churned into butter. After extracting the butter one realizes that butter is not essentially different from buttermilk and buttermilk not essentially different from butter. The bark of a tree goes with the pith and the pith goes with the bark."

PUNDIT (smiling, to Bhudar): "Did you understand that? It is very difficult."

MASTER: "If there is butter, there must be buttermilk also. If you think of butter, you must also think of buttermilk along with it; for there cannot be any butter without buttermilk. Just so, if you accept the Nitya, you must also accept the Lila. It is the process of negation and affirmation. You realize the Nitya by negating the Lila. Then you affirm the Lila, seeing in it the manifestation of the Nitya. One attains this state after realizing Reality in

<sup>6</sup> Because the Master was a vijñani.

<sup>7</sup> The momentum of the actions of his previous birth, which has given rise to his present body.

both aspects : Personal and Impersonal. The Personal is the embodiment of Chit, Consciousness ; and the Impersonal is the Indivisible Satchidananda.

"Brahman alone has become everything. Therefore to the *vijnani* this world is a 'mansion of mirth'. But to the *jnani* it is a 'framework of illusion'. Ramprasad described the world as a 'framework of illusion'. Another man said to him by way of retort :

This very world is a mansion of mirth ;  
Here I can eat, here drink and make merry.  
O physician, you are a fool !  
You see only the surface of things.  
Janaka's might was unsurpassed ;  
What did he lack of the world or the Spirit ?  
Holding to one as well as the other,  
He drank his milk from a brimming cup !

"The *vijnani* enjoys the Bliss of God in a richer way. Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, and some have drunk it. The *vijnani* has drunk milk, enjoyed it, and been nourished by it."

The Master remained silent a few moments and then asked Pundit Shashadhar to have a smoke. The pundit went to the southeast verandah to smoke. Soon he came back to the room and sat on the floor with the devotees. Seated on the small couch, the Master continued the conversation.

MASTER (to the pundit) : "Let me tell you something. There are three kinds of ananda, joy : the joy of worldly enjoyment, the joy of worship, and the Joy of Brahman. The joy of worldly enjoyment is the joy of 'woman and gold', which people always enjoy. The joy of worship one enjoys while chanting the name and glories of God. And the Joy of Brahman is the joy of God-vision. After experiencing the joy of God-vision the *rishis* of olden times went beyond all rules and conventions.

"Chaitanyadeva used to experience three spiritual states : the inmost, the semi-conscious, and the conscious. In the inmost state he would see God and go into samadhi. He would be in the state of *jada samadhi*. In the semi-conscious state he would be partially conscious of the outer world. In the conscious state he could sing the name and glories of God."

HAZRA (to the pundit) : "So your doubts are now solved."

MASTER (to the pundit) : "What is samadhi ? It is the complete merging of the mind in God-Consciousness. The *jnani* experiences *jada samadhi*, in which no trace of 'I' is left. The samadhi attained through the path of *bhakti* is called '*chetana samadhi*'. In this samadhi there remains the consciousness of 'I'--the 'I' of the servant-and-Master relationship, of the lover-and-Beloved relationship, of the enjoyer-and-Food relationship. God is the Master ; the devotee is the servant. God is the Beloved ; the devotee is the lover. God is the Food, and the devotee is the enjoyer. 'I don't want to be sugar. I want to eat it.'"

PUNDIT : "What will happen if God dissolves all of the 'I', if He changes the enjoyer himself into sugar ?"

MASTER (smiling) : "Come, come ! Tell me what is in your mind. But  
\* Ramprasad belonged to the physician caste.

don't the scriptures mention Narada, Sanaka, Sanatana, Sananda, and Sanatkumara ?"

PUNDIT : "Yes, sir. They do."

MASTER : "Though they were jnanis, yet they kept the 'I' of the bhakta. Haven't you read the *Bhagavata* ?"

PUNDIT : "I have read only part of it, not the whole."

MASTER : "Pray to God. He is full of compassion. Will He not listen to the words of His devotee ? He is the Kalpataru. You will get whatever you desire from Him."

PUNDIT : "I haven't thought deeply about these things before. But now I understand."

MASTER : "God keeps a little of 'I' in His devotee even after giving him the Knowledge of Brahman. That 'I' is the 'I of the devotee', the 'I of the jnani'. Through that 'I' the devotee enjoys the infinite play of God."

"The pestle" was almost worn out with rubbing. Only a little was left. That fell into the underbrush and brought about the destruction of the lunar race, the race of the Yadus. The vijñani retains the 'I of the devotee', the 'I of the jnani', in order to taste the Bliss of God and teach people.

"The rishis of old had timid natures. They were easily frightened. Do you know their attitude ? It was this : 'Let me somehow get my own salvation ; who cares for others ?' A hollow piece of drift-wood somehow manages to float ; but it sinks if even a bird sits on it. But Narada and sages of his kind are like a huge log that not only can float across to the other shore but can carry many animals and other creatures as well. A steamship itself crosses the ocean and also carries people across."

"Teachers like Narada belong to the class of the vijñani. They were much more courageous than the other rishis. They are like an expert satrancha-player. You must have noticed how he shouts, as he throws the dice : 'What do I want ? Six ? No, five ! Here is five !' And every time he throws the dice he gets the number he wants. He is such a clever player ! And while playing he even twirls his moustaches."

"A mere jnani trembles with fear. He is like an amateur satrancha-player. He is anxious to move his pieces somehow to the safety zone, where they won't be overtaken by his opponent. But a vijñani isn't afraid of anything. He has realized both aspects of God : Personal and Impersonal. He has talked with God. He has enjoyed the Bliss of God."

"It is a joy to merge the mind in the Indivisible Brahman through contemplation. And it is also a joy to keep the mind on the Lila, the Relative, without dissolving it in the Absolute."

"A mere jnani is a monotonous person. He always analyses, saying : 'It is not this, not this. The world is like a dream.' But I have 'raised both my hands'. Therefore I accept everything."

"Listen to a story. Once a woman went to see her weaver friend. The weaver, who had been spinning different kinds of silk thread, was very happy

"The story is told in the *Mahabharata* of how the relatives of Krishna quarrelled over a fragment of a pestle and exterminated themselves by fighting with one another."



to see her friend and said to her : ' Friend, I can't tell you how happy I am to see you. Let me get you some refreshments.' She left the room. The woman looked at the threads of different colours and was tempted. She hid a bundle of thread under one arm. The weaver returned presently with the refreshments and began to feed her guest with great enthusiasm. But, looking at the thread, she realized that her friend had taken a bundle. Hitting upon a plan to get it back, she said : ' Friend, it is so long since I have seen you. This is a day of great joy for me. I feel very much like asking you to dance with me.' The friend said, ' Sister, I am feeling very happy too.' So the two friends began to dance together. When the weaver saw that her friend danced without raising her hands, she said : ' Friend, let us dance with both hands raised. This is a day of great joy.' But the guest pressed one arm to her side and danced raising only the other. The weaver said : ' How is this, friend ? Why should you dance with only one hand raised ? Dance with me raising both hands. Look at me. See how I dance with both hands raised.' But the guest still pressed one arm to her side. She danced with the other hand raised and said with a smile, ' This is all I know of dancing.' "

The Master continued : " I don't press my arm to my side. Both my hands are free. I am not afraid of anything. I accept both the Nitya and the Lila, both the Absolute and the Relative.

" I said to Keshab Sen that he would not be able to realize God without renouncing the ego. He said, ' Sir, in that case I should not be able to keep my organization together.' Thereupon I said to him : ' I am asking you to give up the "unripe ego", the "wicked ego". But there is no harm in the "ripe ego", the "child ego", the "servant ego", the "ego of Knowledge".'

" The worldly man's ego, the 'ignorant ego', the 'unripe ego', is like a thick stick. It divides, as it were, the water of the Ocean of Satchidananda. But the 'servant ego', the 'child ego', the 'ego of Knowledge', is like a line on the water. One clearly sees that there is only one expanse of water. The dividing line makes it appear that the water has two parts, but one clearly sees that in reality there is only one expanse of water.

" Sankaracharya kept the 'ego of Knowledge' in order to teach people. God keeps in many people the 'ego of a jnani' or the 'ego of a bhakta' even after they have attained Brahmajnana. Hanuman, after realizing God in both His Personal and His Impersonal aspect, cherished toward God the attitude of a servant, a devotee. He said to Rama : ' O Rama, sometimes I think that You are the whole and I am a part of You. Sometimes I think that You are the Master and I am Your servant. And sometimes, Rama, when I contemplate the Absolute, I see that I am You and You are I.'

" Yasoda became grief-stricken at being separated from Krishna, and called on Radha. Radha saw Yasoda's suffering and revealed herself to her as the divine Sakti, which was her real nature. She said to Yasoda : ' Krishna is Chidatma, Absolute Consciousness, and I am Chitsakti, the Primal Power. Ask a boon of Me.' Yasoda said : ' I don't want Brahmajnana. Please grant me only this : that I may see the form of Gopala in my meditation ; that I

may always have the company of Krishna's devotees ; that I may always serve the devotees of God ; that I may always chant God's name and glories.'

"Once the gopis felt a great desire to see the forms of the Lord. So Krishna asked them to dive into the water of the Jamuna. No sooner did they dive into the water than they all arrived at Vaikuntha. There they saw the form of the Lord endowed with His six celestial splendours. But they did not like it. They said to Krishna : 'We want to see Gopala and serve Him. Please grant us that boon alone. We don't want anything else.'

"Before His departure for Mathura, Krishna wanted to give the Knowledge of Brahman to the gopis. He said to them : 'I dwell both inside and outside all beings. Why should you see only one form of Mine ?' The gopis cried in chorus : 'O Krishna, do You want to go away from us ? Is that why You are instructing us in Brahmajnana ?'

"Do you know the attitude of the gopis ? It is this : 'We are Radha's and Radha is ours.'"<sup>10</sup>

A DEVOTEE : "Does this 'I' of the devotee never disappear altogether ?"

MASTER : "Yes, it disappears at times. Then one attains the Knowledge of Brahman and goes into samadhi. I too lose it, but not for all the time. In the musical scale there are seven notes : sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, and ni. But one cannot keep one's voice on 'ni' a long time. One must bring it down again to the lower notes. I pray to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, do not give me Brahmajnana.' Formerly believers in God with form used to visit me a great deal. Then the modern Brahmajnanis<sup>11</sup> began to arrive. During that period I used to remain unconscious in samadhi most of the time. Whenever I regained consciousness, I would say to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, please don't give me Brahmajnana.'"

PUNDIT : "Does God listen to our prayers ?"

MASTER : "God is the Kalpataru, the Wish-fulfilling Tree. You will certainly get whatever you ask of Him. But you must pray standing near the Kalpataru. Only then will your prayer be fulfilled. But you must remember another thing. God knows our inner feeling. A man gets the fulfilment of the desire he cherishes while practising sadhana. As one thinks, so one receives. A magician was showing his tricks before a king. \*Now and then he exclaimed : 'Come confusion ! Come delusion ! O King, give me money ! Give me clothes !' Suddenly his tongue turned upward and clove to the roof of his mouth. He experienced kumbhaka. He could utter neither word nor sound, and became motionless. People thought he was dead. They built a vault of bricks and buried him there in that posture. After a thousand years someone dug into the vault. Inside it people found a man seated in samadhi. They took him for a holy man and worshipped him. When they shook him his tongue was loosened and regained its normal position. The magician became conscious of the outer world and cried, as he had a thousand years

<sup>10</sup> The ideal of the gopis was not to merge themselves in God-Consciousness, but to keep their individuality in order to enjoy the communion of Radha and Krishna. They regarded themselves as the companions of Radha.

<sup>11</sup> The members of the Brahmo Samaj, who believed in the formless Brahman.

before : ' Come confusion ! Come delusion ! O King, give me money ! Give me clothes ! '

" I used to weep, praying to the Divine Mother, ' O Mother, destroy with Thy thunderbolt my inclination to reason. ' "

PUNDIT : " Then you too had an inclination to reason ? "

MASTER : " Yes, once. "

PUNDIT : " Then please assure us that we shall get rid of that inclination too. How did you get rid of yours ? "

MASTER : " Oh, somehow or other. "

Sri Ramakrishna was silent awhile. Then he went on with his conversation.

MASTER : " God is the Kalpataru. One should pray standing near It. Then one will get whatever one desires. "

" How many things God has created ! Infinite is His universe. But what need have I to know about His infinite splendours ? If I must know these, let me first realize Him. Then God Himself will tell me all about them. What need have I to know how many houses and how many government securities Jadu Mallick possesses ? All that I need is somehow to converse with Jadu Mallick. I may succeed in seeing him by jumping over a ditch or through a petition or after being pushed about by his gate-keeper. Once I get a chance to talk to him, then he himself will tell me all about his possessions if I ask him. If one becomes acquainted with the master, then one is respected by his officers too. (*All laugh.*) "

" There are some who do not care to know the splendours of God. What do I care about knowing how many gallons of wine there are in the tavern ? One bottle is enough for me. Why should I desire the knowledge of God's splendours ? I am intoxicated with the little wine I have swallowed. "

" Both bhaktiyoga and jnanayoga are paths by which you can realize God. Whatever path you may follow, you will certainly realize Him. The path of bhakti is an easy one. The path of knowledge and discrimination is very difficult. Why should one reason so much to know which path is the best ? I talked about this with Vijay for many days. Once I told him about a man who used to pray, ' O God, reveal to me who and what You are. '

" The path of knowledge and discrimination is difficult indeed. Parvati, the Divine Mother, revealed Her various forms to Her father and said, ' Father, if you want Brahmajnana, then live in the company of holy men. '

" Brahman cannot be described in words. It is said in the *Rama Gita* that Brahman has only been indirectly hinted at by the scriptures. When one speaks about the ' cowherd village on the Ganges ', one indirectly states that the village is situated on the *bank* of the Ganges. "

" Why shouldn't a man be able to realize the formless Brahman ? But it is extremely difficult. He cannot if he has even the slightest trace of worldliness. He can be directly aware of Brahman in his inmost consciousness only when he renounces all sense-objects—form, taste, smell, touch, and sound—and only when his mind completely stops functioning. And then, too, he knows only this much of Brahman—that It exists. "



Quoting from an Upanishad, the pundit said, "It is to be experienced only as Existence."

MASTER : "In order to realize God a devotee should make use of a particular attitude—the attitude of a 'hero' or a friend or a handmaid or a child."

MANI MALLICK : "Only then can one feel attached to God."

MASTER : "For many days I cherished the feeling that I was a companion of the Divine Mother. I used to say : 'I am the handmaid of Brahmanayi, the Blissful Mother. O companions of the Divine Mother, make me the Mother's handmaid ! I shall go about proudly, saying, "I am Brahmanayi's handmaid !"'"

"Some souls realize God without practising any spiritual discipline. They are called *nityasiddha*, eternally perfect. Those who have realized God through austerity, *japa*, and the like, are called *sadhanasiddha*, perfect through spiritual discipline. Again, there are those called *kripasiddha*, perfect through divine grace. These last may be compared to a room kept dark a thousand years, which becomes light the moment a lamp is brought in.

"There is also a class of devotees, the *hathsiddha*, that is to say, those who have suddenly attained God-vision. Their case is like that of a poor boy who has suddenly found favour with a rich man. The rich man marries his daughter to the boy and along with her gives him land, house, carriage, servants, and so forth.

"There is still another class of devotees, the *svapnasiddha*, who have had the vision of God in a dream."

SURENDRA (smiling) : "Let us go to sleep then. We shall wake and find ourselves *babus*, aristocrats."

MASTER (tenderly) : "You are already a *babu*. When the letter 'â' is joined to the letter 'ka', 'ka' becomes 'kâ'. It is futile to add another 'â'. If you add it, you will still have the same 'kâ'. (All laugh.)

"The *nityasiddha* is in a class apart. He is like *arani* wood.<sup>12</sup> A little rubbing produces fire. You can get fire from it even without rubbing. The *nityasiddha* realizes God by practising slight spiritual discipline and sometimes without practising any at all. But he does practise spiritual discipline after realizing God. He is like the gourd or pumpkin vine—first fruit, then flower."

The pundit smiled at this illustration.

MASTER : "There is the instance of *Prahlada*. He was a *nityasiddha*. While writing the letter 'ka' he shed a stream of tears."<sup>13</sup>

The Master was pleased with the pundit's humility. He praised him to the devotees.

MASTER : "He has such a nice nature. You find no difficulty in driving a nail into a mud wall. But its point breaks if you try to drive it against a stone; and still it will not pierce it. There are people whose spiritual consciousness is not at all awakened even though they hear about God a

<sup>12</sup> A piece of wood used for kindling the sacred fire by friction.

<sup>13</sup> Because the letter "ka" reminded *Prahlada* of Krishna, his Ideal Deity.

thousand times. They are like a crocodile, on whose hide you cannot make any impression with a sword."

PUNDIT : " But one can hurt a crocodile by throwing a spear into its belly." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*) : " What good is there in reading a whole lot of scriptures ? What good is there in the study of philosophy ? What is the use of talking big ? In order to learn archery one should first aim at a banana tree, then at a reed, then at a wick, and last at a flying bird. At the beginning one should concentrate on God with form.

" Then there are devotees who are beyond the three gunas. They are eternally devoted to God, like Narada. These devotees behold Krishna as Chinmaya, all Spirit, His Abode as Chinmaya, His devotee as Chinmaya. To them God is eternal, His Abode is eternal, His devotee is eternal.

" Those who reason and speculate following the process of ' Neti, neti ' do not accept the Incarnation of God. Hazra says well that Divine Incarnation is only for the bhakta, and not for the jnani, because the jnani is quite contented with his ideal, ' I am He '."

Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees remained silent awhile. The pundit resumed the conversation.

PUNDIT : " Sir, how does one get rid of callousness ? Laughter makes me think of muscles and nerves. Grief makes me think of the nervous system."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " That is why Narayan Shastri used to say, ' The harmful effect of the study of the scriptures is that it encourages reasoning and arguing. ' "

PUNDIT : " Is there no way for us then ? "

MASTER : " Yes, there is the path of discrimination. In a song occurs the line : ' Ask her son Discrimination about the Truth. ' "

" The way lies through discrimination, renunciation, and passionate yearning for God. Unless a man practises discrimination, he cannot utter the right words. One time, after expounding religion at great length, Pundit Samadhyayi said, ' God is dry. ' He reminded me of the man who once said, ' My uncle's cow-shed is full of horses. ' Now, does anyone keep horses in a cow-shed ? (*With a smile*) You have become like a chanabara " fried in butter. Now it will be good for you, and for others as well, if you are soaked in syrup a few days. Just a few days."

PUNDIT (*smiling*) : " The sweetmeat is over-fried. It has become charred."

MASTER (*with a laugh*) : " No ! No ! It is brown as a cockroach. Just the right colour."

HAZRA : " The sweetmeat is well cooked. It has become spongy. Now it will soak up the syrup nicely."

MASTER : " You see, there is no need to read too much of the scriptures. If you read too much you will be inclined to reason and argue. Nangta used to teach me thus : What you get by repeating the word ' Gita ' ten times is the essence of the book. In other words, if you repeat ' Gita ' ten times it is reversed into ' tagi ', which indicates renunciation.

" A Bengali sweetmeat made from cheese, first fried in butter and then soaked in syrup."

"Yes, the way to realize God is through discrimination, renunciation, and yearning for Him. What kind of yearning? One should yearn for God as the cow, with yearning heart, runs after its calf."

PUNDIT: "The same thing is said in the Vedas: 'O God, we call on Thee as the cow lows for the calf.'"

MASTER: "Add your tears to your yearning. And if you can renounce everything through discrimination and dispassion, then you will be able to see God. That yearning brings about God-intoxication, whether you follow the path of knowledge or the path of devotion. The sage Durvasa was mad with the Knowledge of God."

"There is a great deal of difference between the Knowledge of a householder and that of an all-renouncing sannyasi. The householder's knowledge is like the light of a lamp, which illumines only the inside of a room. He cannot see anything, with the help of such knowledge, except his own body and his immediate family. But the knowledge of the all-renouncing monk is like the light of the sun. Through that light he can see both inside and outside the room. Chaitanyadeva's knowledge had the brilliance of the sun—the sun of Knowledge. Further, he radiated the soothing light of the moon of Devotion. He was endowed with both—the Knowledge of Brahman and ecstatic love of God."

(To the pundit) "One can attain spiritual consciousness through both affirmation and negation. There is the positive path of love and devotion, and there is the negative path of knowledge and discrimination. You are preaching the path of knowledge. But that creates a very difficult situation: There the guru and the disciple do not see each other. Sukadeva went to Janaka for instruction about the Knowledge of Brahman. Janaka said to him: 'You must pay me the guru's fee beforehand. When you attain the Knowledge of Brahman you won't pay me the fee, because the knower of Brahman sees no difference between the guru and the disciple.'"

"Both negation and affirmation are ways to realize one and the same goal. Infinite are the opinions and infinite are the ways. But you must remember one thing. The injunction is that the path of devotion described by Narada is best suited to the Kaliyuga. According to this path, first comes bhakti; then bhava, when bhakti is mature. Higher than bhava are mahabhava and prema. An ordinary mortal does not attain mahabhava and prema. He who has achieved these has realized the goal, that is to say, has attained God."

PUNDIT: "In expounding religion one has to use a great many words."

MASTER: "While preaching, eliminate the 'head and tail', that is to say, emphasize only the essentials."

The pundit and Mani Mallick became engaged in conversation. Mani was a member of the Brahmo Samaj. The pundit argued vehemently about the good and bad sides of the Samaj. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the small couch and looked on, smiling. Presently he remarked: "This is the tamasic aspect of sattva, the attitude of a hero. This is necessary. One should not hold one's tongue at the sight of injustice and untruth. Suppose a bad woman wants to drag you from the path of righteousness. You must then



assume the heroic attitude and say : ' What ? You witch ! You dare injure my spiritual life ? I shall cut your body in two right now.' "

With a smile Sri Ramakrishna said to the pundit : " Mani Mallick has been following the tenets of the Brahmo Samaj a long time. You can't convert him to your views. Is it an easy thing to destroy old tendencies ? Once there lived a very pious Hindu who always worshipped the Divine Mother and chanted Her name. When the Mussalmans conquered the country, they forced him to embrace Islam. They said to him : ' You are now a Mussalman. Say " Allah ". From now on you must repeat only the name of Allah.' With great difficulty he repeated the word ' Allah ', but every now and then blurted out ' Jagadamba'.<sup>15</sup> At that the Mussalmans were about to beat him. Thereupon he said to them : ' I beseech you ! Please do not kill me. I have been trying my utmost to repeat the name of Allah, but our Jagadamba has filled me up to the throat. She pushes out your Allah.' (*All laugh.*)

(*To the pundit*) " Please don't say anything to Mani Mallick. You must know that there are different tastes. There are also different powers of digestion. God has made different religions and creeds to suit different aspirants. By no means all are fit for the Knowledge of Brahman. Therefore the worship of God with form has been provided.

" The mother brings home a fish for her children. She curries part of the fish, part she fries, and with another part she makes pilau. By no means all can digest the pilau. So she makes fish soup for those who have weak stomachs. Further, some want pickled or fried fish. There are different temperaments. There are differences in the capacity to comprehend."

All sat in silence. Sri Ramakrishna said to the pundit, " Go and visit the temples and take a stroll in the garden." It was about half past five in the afternoon. The pundit left the room with his friends and several of the devotees.

After a while the Master went with M. toward the bathing-ghat on the Ganges. He said to M., " Baburam now says, ' What shall I gain by study ? ' " On the bank of the river he met the pundit and said to him, " Aren't you going to the Kali temple ? " The pundit said : " Yes, sir. Let us go together."

With a smiling face Sri Ramakrishna proceeded to the temple through the courtyard. He said to the pundit, " Listen to a song."

He sang :

Is Kali, my Mother, really black ?  
The Naked One, of blackest hue,  
Lights the Lotus of the Heart. . . .

As he was going through the courtyard, he quoted to the pundit from a song :

Lighting the lamp of Knowledge in the chamber of your heart,  
Behold the face of the Mother, Brahman's Embodiment.

They came to the temple. Sri Ramakrishna saluted the Divine Mother touching the ground with his forehead.

<sup>15</sup> " The Mother of the Universe ", a name of the Divine Mother.

Red hibiscus flowers and bel-leaves adorned the Mother's feet. Her three eyes radiated love for Her devotees. Two of Her hands were raised as if to give them boons and reassurance ; the other two hands held symbols of death. She was clothed in a sari of Benares silk and was decked with ornaments.

Referring to the image, one of the party remarked, " I heard it was made by the sculptor Nabin." The Master answered : " Yes, I know. But to me She is the Embodiment of Spirit."

As Sri Ramakrishna was coming back to his room with the devotees, he said to Baburam, " Come with us." M. also joined them.

It was dusk. The Master was sitting on the semicircular porch west of his room. Baburam and M. sat near him. He was in a mood of partial ecstasy.

Rakhal was not then living with Sri Ramakrishna, and therefore the Master was having difficulties about his personal service. Several devotees lived with him, but he could not bear the touch of everyone during his spiritual moods. He hinted to Baburam : " Do stay with me. It will be very nice. In this mood I cannot allow others to touch me."

The pundit entered the Master's room after visiting the temples. The Master said to him from the porch, " Take some refreshments." The pundit said that he had not yet performed his evening devotions. At once Sri Ramakrishna stood up and sang in an exalted mood :

Why should I go to Ganga or Gaya, to Kasi, Kanchi, or Prabhas,  
So long as I can breathe my last with Kali's name upon my lips ?  
What need of rituals has a man, what need of devotions any more,  
If he repeats the Mother's name at the three holy hours ? . . .

Intoxicated with ecstatic love, the Master said : " How long should one perform devotions ? So long as one's mind does not merge in God while repeating Om."

PUNDIT : " Then let me eat the refreshments. I shall perform the devotions later on."

MASTER : " No, I don't want to obstruct the current of your life. It is not good to renounce anything before the proper time arrives. When the fruit ripens, the flower drops off of itself. One shouldn't forcibly tear off the green branch of a coconut tree. That injures the tree."

Surendra was about to leave. He invited his friends into his carriage. The Master, still in an ecstatic mood, said, " Don't take more people than your horse can draw." Surendra took leave of Sri Ramakrishna. The pundit left the room to perform his worship. M. and Baburam saluted the Master. They were about to leave for Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna was still in an ecstatic mood.

MASTER (to M.) : " I cannot utter a word now. Stay a few minutes."

M. again took his seat and waited for the Master's command. Sri Ramakrishna motioned to Baburam to take a seat and asked him to fan him a little. M. also took part in rendering this personal service to the Master.

MASTER (to M. tenderly) : " Why don't you come here so frequently now ? "

M : "Not for any special reason. I have been rather busy at home."

MASTER : "Yesterday I came to know Baburam's inner nature. That is why I have been trying so hard to persuade him to live with me. The mother bird hatches the egg in proper time. Boys like Baburam are pure in heart. They have not yet fallen into the clutches of 'woman and gold'. Isn't that so?"

M : "It is true, sir. They are still stainless."

MASTER : "They are like a new pot. Milk kept in it will not turn sour."

M : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "I need Baburam here. I pass through certain spiritual states when I need someone like him. He says he must not, all at once, live with me permanently, for it will create difficulties. His relatives will make trouble. I am asking him to come here Saturdays and Sundays."

The pundit entered the room with his friends. He had finished his devotions and was ready to eat the refreshments. One of his companions asked the Master : "Shall we succeed in spiritual life? Please tell us what our way is."

MASTER : "You all have the yearning for liberation. If an aspirant has yearning, that is enough for him to realize God. Don't eat any food of the *sraddha* ceremony." Live in the world like an unchaste woman. She performs her household duties with great attention, but her mind dwells day and night on her paramour. Perform your duties in the world but keep your mind always fixed on God."

The pundit finished eating his refreshments.

MASTER (to the pundit) : "You have read the *Gita*, no doubt. It says that there is a special power of God in the man who is honoured and respected by all."

The pundit quoted the verse from the *Gita*.

MASTER : "You surely possess divine power."

PUNDIT : "Shall I labour with perseverance to finish the task that I have accepted?"

Sri Ramakrishna forced himself, as it were, to say, "Yes." He soon changed the conversation.

MASTER : "One cannot but admit the manifestation of power. Vidya-sagar once asked me, 'Has God given more power to some than to others?' I said to him : 'Certainly. Otherwise, how can one man kill a hundred? If there is no special manifestation of power, then why is Queen Victoria so much honoured and respected? Don't you admit it?' He agreed with me."

The pundit and his friends saluted the Master and were about to take their leave. Sri Ramakrishna said to the pundit : "Come again. One hemp-smoker rejoices in the company of another hemp-smoker. They even embrace each other. But they hide at the sight of people not of their own kind. A cow licks the body of her calf; but she threatens a strange cow with her horns." (All Laugh.)

The pundit left the room. With a smile the Master said : "He has become 'diluted' even in one day. Did you notice how modest he was? And he accepted everything I said."

<sup>10</sup> Offering of food and drink to deceased relatives, especially ancestors.



Moonlight flooded the semicircular porch. Sri Ramakrishna was still seated there. M. was about to leave.

MASTER (*tenderly*): "Must you go now?"

M: "Yes, sir. Let me say good-bye."

MASTER: "I have been thinking of visiting the houses of the devotees. I want to visit yours also. What do you say?"

M: "That will be very fine."

*Thursday, July 3, 1884*

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. It was the day of the "Return Car Festival". The Lord of the Universe was worshipped in Balaram's house as Jagannath. There was a small car in the house for use during the Car Festival.

Balaram's father was a pious Vaishnava who devoted most of his time to prayer and meditation in his garden house at Vrindavan. He also studied devotional books and enjoyed the company of devotees. Balaram had brought his father to Calcutta to meet the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna was in a very happy mood. Seated near him were Ram, Balaram, Balaram's father, M., Manomohan, and several young devotees. He was conversing with them.

MASTER (*to Balaram's father and the others*): "The *Bhaktamala* is one of the Vaishnava books. It is a fine book. It describes the lives of the various Vaishnava devotees. But it is one-sided. At one place the author found peace of mind only after compelling Bhagavati, the Divine Mother, to take Her initiation according to the Vaishnava discipline.

"Once I spoke highly of Vaishnavcharan to Mathur and persuaded him to invite Vaishnavcharan to his house. Mathur welcomed him with great courtesy. He fed his guest from silver plates. Then do you know what happened? Vaishnav said in front of Mathur, 'You will achieve nothing whatsoever in spiritual life unless you accept Krishna as your Ideal.' Mathur was a follower of the Sakta cult and a worshipper of the Divine Mother. At once his face became crimson. I nudged Vaishnavcharan.

"I understand that the *Bhagavata* also contains some statements like that. I hear that it is said there that trying to cross the ocean of the world without accepting Krishna as the Ideal Deity is like trying to cross a great sea by holding to the tail of a dog. Each sect magnifies its own view.

"The Saktas, too, try to belittle the Vaishnavas. The Vaishnavas say that Krishna alone is the Helmsman to take one across the ocean of the world. The Saktas retort: 'Oh, yes! We agree to that. Our Divine Mother is the Empress of the Universe. Why should She bother about a ferry-boat? Therefore She has engaged that fellow Krishna for the purpose.' (*All laugh.*)

"Besides, how vain people are about their own sects! There are weavers in the villages near Kamarpukar. Many of them are Vaishnavas and like to talk big. They say: 'Which Vishnu does he worship? The Preserver? Oh, we wouldn't touch him!' Or: 'Which Siva are you talking about? We accept the Atmarama Siva.' Or again, 'Please explain to us which Hari you worship.' They spin their yarn and indulge in talk like that.

"Rati's mother, Rani Katyayani's favourite confidante, is a follower of Vaishnavacharan. She is a bigoted Vaishnava. She used to visit me very frequently, and none could outdo her in devotion. One day she noticed me eating the prasad from the Kali temple. Since then I haven't seen even her shadow.

"He is indeed a real man who has harmonized everything. Most people are one-sided. But I find that all opinions point to the One. All views—the Sakta, the Vaishnava, the Vedanta—have that One for their centre. He who is formless is, again, endowed with form. It is He who appears in different forms. 'The attributeless Brahman is my Father. God with attributes is my Mother. Whom shall I blame? Whom shall I praise? The two pans of the scales are equally heavy.'

"He who is described in the Vedas is also described in the Tantras and the Puranas. All of them speak about the one Satchidananda. The Nitya and the Lila are the two aspects of the one Reality. It is described in the Vedas as 'Om Satchidananda Brahman,' in the Tantras as 'Om Satchidananda Siva', the ever-pure Siva, and in the Puranas as 'Om Satchidananda Krishna'. All the scriptures, the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras, speak only of one Satchidananda. It is stated in the Vaishnava scriptures that it is Krishna Himself who has become Kali."

Sri Ramakrishna went to the porch for a few minutes and then returned. As he was going out, Vishvambhar's daughter, six or seven years old, saluted him. On returning to the room, the Master began talking to the little girl and her companions, who were of the same age.

THE CHILD (*to the Master*): "I saluted you and you didn't even notice it."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Did you? I really didn't notice."

CHILD: "Then wait. I want to salute you again—the other foot too."

Sri Ramakrishna laughed and sat down. He returned the salute and bowed to the child, touching the ground with his forehead. He asked her to sing. The child said, "I swear I don't sing." When the Master pressed her again, she said, "Should you press me when I said 'I swear'?" The Master was very happy with the children and sang light and frivolous songs to entertain them.

He sang:

Come, let me braid your hair,  
Lest your husband should scold you  
When he beholds you!

The children and the devotees laughed.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "The paramahansa is like a five-year-old child. He sees everything filled with Consciousness. At one time I was staying at Kamarpukur when Shivaram<sup>17</sup> was four or five years old. One day he was trying to catch grasshoppers near the pond. The leaves were moving. To stop their rustling he said to the leaves: 'Hush! Hush! I want to catch a grass-hopper.' Another day it was stormy. It rained hard. Shivaram was with me inside the house. There were flashes of lightning. He wanted to open the door and go out. I scolded him and stopped him, but still he peeped out

<sup>17</sup> A nephew of the Master.

now and then. When he saw the lightning he exclaimed, 'There, uncle ! They are striking matches again !'

"The paramahansa is like a child. He cannot distinguish between a stranger and a relative. He isn't particular about worldly relationships. One day Shivaram said to me, 'Uncle, are you my father's brother or his brother-in-law ?'

"The paramahansa is like a child. He doesn't keep any track of his whereabouts. He sees everything as Brahman. He is indifferent to his own movements. Shivaram went to Hriday's house to see the Durga Puja. He slipped out of the house and wandered away. A passer-by saw the child, who was then only four years old, and asked, 'Where do you come from ?' He couldn't say much. He only said the word 'hut'. He was speaking of the big hut in which the image of the Divine Mother was being worshipped. The stranger asked him further, 'Whom are you living with ?' He only said the word 'brother'.

"Sometimes the paramahansa behaves like a madman. When I experienced that divine madness I used to worship my own sexual organ as the Siva-phallus. But I can't do that now. A few days after the dedication of the temple at Dakshineswar, a madman came there who was really a sage endowed with the Knowledge of Brahman. He had a bamboo twig in one hand and a potted mango-plant in the other, and was wearing torn shoes. He didn't follow any social conventions. After bathing in the Ganges he didn't perform any religious rites. He ate something that he carried in a corner of his wearing-cloth. Then he entered the Kali temple and chanted hymns to the Deity. The temple trembled. Haladhari was then in the shrine. The madman wasn't allowed to eat at the guest-house, but he paid no attention to this slight. He searched for food in the rubbish heap where the dogs were eating crumbs from the discarded leaf-plates. Now and then he pushed the dogs aside to get his crumbs. The dogs didn't mind either. Haladhari followed him and asked : 'Who are you ? Are you a purnajnani ?'<sup>16</sup> The madman whispered, 'Sh ! Yes, I am a purnajnani.' My heart began to palpitate as Haladhari told me about it. I clung to Hriday. I said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, shall I too have to pass through such a state ?' We all went to see the man. He spoke words of great wisdom to us but behaved like a madman before others. Haladhari followed him a great way when he left the garden. After passing the gate he said to Haladhari : 'What else shall I say to you ? When you no longer make any distinction between the water of this pool and the water of the Ganges, then you will know that you have Perfect Knowledge.' Saying this he walked rapidly away."

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk with M. Other devotees, too, were present. •

MASTER (to M.) : "How do you feel about Shashadhar ?"

M : "He is very nice."

MASTER : "He is very intelligent, isn't he ?"

M : "Yes, sir. He is very erudite."

<sup>16</sup> A perfect knower of Brahman.



MASTER : " According to the *Gita* there is a power of God in one who is respected and honoured by many. But Shashadhar has still a few things to do. What will he accomplish with mere scholarship ? He needs to practise some austerity. It is necessary to practise some spiritual discipline.

" Gauri Pundit practised austerity. When he chanted a hymn to the Divine Mother, the other pundits would seem no more than earthworms.

" Narayan Shastri was not merely a scholar, either. He practised sadhana as well. He studied for twenty-five years without a break. Nyaya alone, he studied for seven years. Still he would go into ecstasy while repeating the name of Siva. The King of Jaipur wanted to make him his court pundit, but Narayan refused. He used to spend much time here. He had a great desire to go to the Vasishtha Asrama to practise tapasya. He often spoke to me about it, but I forbade him to go there. At that he said : ' Who knows when I shall die ? When shall I practise sadhana ? Any day I may crack.' After much insistence on his part I let him go. Some say that he is dead, that he died while practising austerity. Others say that he is still alive and that they saw him off on a railway train.

" Before meeting Keshab, I asked Narayan Shastri to visit him and tell me what he thought of him. Narayan reported that Keshab was an adept in japa. He knew astrology and remarked that Keshab had been born under a good star. Then I went to visit Keshab in the garden house at Belgharia. Hriday was with me. The moment I saw Keshab, I said : ' Of all the people I see here, he alone has dropped his tail. He can now live on land as well as in water, like a frog.'

" Keshab sent three members of the Brahmo Samaj to the temple garden at Dakshineswar to test me. Prasanna was one of them. They were commissioned to watch me day and night, and to report to Keshab. They were in my room and intended to spend the night there. They constantly uttered the word ' Dayamaya ' <sup>19</sup> and said to me : ' Follow Keshab Babu. That will do you good.' I said, ' I believe in God with form.' Still they went on with their exclamations of ' Dayamaya ! ' Then a strange mood came over me. I said to them, ' Get out of here ! ' I didn't allow them to spend the night in my room. So they slept on the verandah. Captain also spent the night in the temple garden the first time he visited me.

" Michael <sup>20</sup> visited the temple garden when Narayan Shastri was living with me. Dwarika Babu, Mathur's eldest son, brought him here. The owners of the temple garden were about to get into a lawsuit with the English proprietors of the neighbouring powder magazine ; so they wanted Michael's advice. I met him in the big room next to the manager's office. Narayan Shastri was with me. I asked Narayan to talk to him. Michael couldn't talk very well in Sanskrit. He made mistakes. Then they talked in the popular dialect. Narayan Shastri asked him his reason for giving up the Hindu

<sup>19</sup> " The Compassionate One." The Brahmos are fond of using this name for God, whom they believe to be formless and yet personal and endowed with attributes.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a lawyer, and one of the great Bengali poets. He was a convert to Christianity.

religion. Pointing to his stomach, Michael said, 'It was for this.' Narayan said, 'What shall I say to a man who gives up his religion for his belly's sake?' Thereupon Michael asked me to say something. I said: 'I don't know why, but I don't feel like saying anything. Someone seems to be pressing my tongue.'"

MANOMOHAN: "Mr. Choudhury will not come. He said: 'That fellow Shashadhar from Faridpur will be there. I shall not go.'"

Mr. Choudhury had obtained his Master's degree from Calcutta University. He drew a salary of three or four hundred rupees. After the death of his first wife he had felt intense dispassion for the world, but after some time he had married again. He frequently visited the Master at the temple garden.

MASTER: "How mean of him! He is vain of his scholarship. Besides, he has married a second time. He looks on the world as a mere mud-puddle.

(*To the devotees*) "This attachment to 'woman and gold' makes a man small-minded. When I first saw Haramohan he had many good traits. I longed to see him. He was then seventeen or eighteen years old. I used to send for him every now and then, but he wouldn't come. He is now living away from the family with his wife. He had been living with his uncle before. That was very good. He had no worldly troubles. Now he has a separate home and does the marketing for his wife daily. The other day he came to Dakshineswar. I said to him: 'Go away. Leave this place. I don't even feel like touching you.'"

Sri Ramakrishna went to the inner apartments to see the Deity. He offered some flowers. The ladies of Balaram's family were pleased to see him.

The Master came back to the drawing-room and said: "The worldly-minded practise devotions, japa, and austerity only by fits and starts. But those who know nothing else but God repeat His name with every breath. Some always repeat mentally, 'Om Rama'. Even the followers of the path of knowledge repeat, 'Soham', 'I am He'. There are others whose tongues are always moving, repeating the name of God. One should remember and think of God constantly."

Pundit Shashadhar entered the room with one or two friends and saluted the Master.

MASTER (*smiling*): "We are like the bridesmaids waiting near the bed for the arrival of the groom."

The pundit laughed. The room was filled with devotees, among them Dr. Pratap and Balaram's father. The Master continued his talk.

MASTER (*to Shashadhar*): "The first sign of knowledge is a peaceful nature, and the second is absence of egotism. You have both. There are other indications of a jnani. He shows intense dispassion in the presence of a sadhu, is a lion when at work, for instance, when he lectures, and is full of wit before his wife. (*All laugh.*)

"But the nature of the vijñani is quite different, as was the case with Chaitanyadeva. He acts like a child or a madman or an inert thing or a ghou. While in the mood of a child, he sometimes shows childlike guilelessness,

sometimes the frivolity of adolescence, and sometimes, while instructing others, the strength of a young man."

PUNDIT : " By what kind of bhakti does one realize God ? "

MASTER : " Three kinds of bhakti are found, according to the nature of the man : sattvic bhakti, rajasic bhakti, and tamasic bhakti.

" Sattvic bhakti is known to God alone. It makes no outward display. A man with such devotion loves privacy. Perhaps he meditates inside the mosquito net, where nobody sees him. When this kind of devotion is awakened, one hasn't long to wait for the vision of God. The appearance of the dawn in the east shows that the sun will rise before long.

" A man with rajasic bhakti feels like making a display of his devotion before others. He worships the Deity with ' sixteen ingredients ', " enters the temple wearing a silk cloth, and puts around his neck a string of rudraksha beads interspersed here and there with beads of gold and ruby.

" A man with tamasic bhakti shows the courage and boisterousness of a highway robber. A highway robber goes on his expedition openly, shouting, ' Kill ! Plunder ! ' He isn't afraid even of eight police inspectors. The devotee with tamasic bhakti also shouts like a madman : ' Hara ! Hara ! Vyom ! Vyom ! " Victory to Kali ! ' He has great strength of mind and burning faith.

" A Sakta has such faith. He says : ' What ? I have uttered once the name of Kali and of Durga ! I have uttered once the name of Rama ! Can there be any sin in me ? ' "

" The Vaishnavas have a very humble and lowly attitude. (*Looking at Balaram's father*) They tell their rosary and whine and whimper : ' O Krishna, be gracious to us ! We are wretched ! We are sinners ! ' "

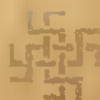
" A man should have such fiery faith as to be able to say, ' I have uttered the name of God ; how can I be a sinner ? ' Imagine a man repeating the name of Hari day and night and at the same time saying that he is a sinner ! " "

So saying, Sri Ramakrishna became overwhelmed with divine ecstasy and sang :

If only I can pass away repeating Durga's name,  
How canst Thou then, O Blessed One,  
Withhold from me deliverance,  
Wretched though I may be ?  
I may have stolen a drink of wine, or killed a child unborn,  
Or slain a woman or a cow,  
Or even caused a brahmin's death ;  
But, though it all be true,  
Nothing of this can make me feel the least uneasiness ;  
For through the power of Thy sweet name  
My wretched soul may still aspire  
Even to Brahmanhood.

<sup>21</sup> As prescribed in the books of Hindu ritual.

<sup>22</sup> By such loud exclamations a devotee of Siva invokes his Ideal Deity.





He sang again :

Behold my Mother playing with Siva, lost in an ecstasy of joy !  
 Drunk with a draught of celestial wine, She reels, and yet She does  
     not fall.  
 Erect She stands on Siva's bosom, and the earth trembles under  
     Her tread ;  
 She and Her Lord are mad with frenzy, casting aside all fear and  
     shame !

Pundit Shashadhar was weeping. Vaishnavcharan, the musician, sang :

O tongue, always repeat the name of Mother Durga !  
 Who but your Mother Durga will save you in distress ?  
 Thou art the heavens and the earth, and Thou the nether world ;  
 From Thee have the twelve Gopalas and Hari and Siva sprung.  
 The ten Embodiments of Divine Sakti art Thou,  
 And Thou the ten Avatars : this time, save me Thou must !  
 The moving and the unmoving, the gross and the subtle, art Thou :  
 Creation and preservation art Thou, and the last dissolution.  
 Thou art the Primal Root of this manifold universe ;  
 The Mother of the three worlds, their only Saviour, art Thou ;  
 Thou art the Sakti of all, and Thou Thine own Sakti, too.

As the Master listened to the last few lines, he went into an ecstatic mood.

The Master himself sang : "

O Mother, for Yasoda Thou wouldst dance, when she called Thee  
     her precious "Blue Jewel" ; "

Where hast Thou hidden that lovely form, O terrible Syama ?  
 Dance that way once for me, O Mother ! Throw down Thy sword  
     and take the flute ;

Cast off Thy garland of heads, and wear Thy wild-flower garland.  
 If without Siva Thou canst not dance, then let Balarama be Thy Siva.  
 Dance, O Syama, as Thou didst dance when Thou wast Krishna !

Mother, play on Thy flute again, once so full of delight for the gopis ;  
 Play again on Thy magic flute, which called the cattle in from the  
     pasture,

Stopping the Jamuna's murmuring flow and turning it Backward.

Hot in the sky the sun would burn, when Yasoda, restless for her  
     Krishna,

Fondly would call : " Here, my Gopala ! Cream and butter—eat  
     them, my Darling ! "

And she would comb His long black hair and carefully braid it.

Bending Thy supple body, Mother, both at the neck, the waist, and  
     the knee,

Thou didst dance with Thy friend Sridama, while Thy two anklets  
     played the music :

*Ta-thaia ! Ta-thaia ! Ta-ta ! Thaia-thaia !*

Hearing their captivating sound, the gopis would rush there.

■ This song signifies the oneness of Krishna and Kali.

<sup>24</sup> A pet name of the Baby Krishna.



Again Pundit Shashadhar shed tears of love.

Sri Ramakrishna came down to consciousness of the world. Pointing to Shashadhar, he said to M., "Why don't you prod him?" He wanted M. or some other devotee to ask Shashadhar a question.

RAMDAYAL (to Shashadhar): "The scriptures speak of Brahman's form as a projection of mind. Who is it that projects?"

SHASHADHAR: "It is Brahman Itself that does so. It is no projection of a man's mind."

PRATAP: "Why does Brahman project the form?"

MASTER: "You ask why? Brahman doesn't act in consultation with others. It is Brahman's pleasure. Brahman is self-willed. Why should we try to know the reason for Brahman's acting this way or that? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Eat the mangoes. What is the good of calculating how many trees there are in the orchard, how many thousands of branches, and how many millions of leaves? One cannot realize Truth by futile arguments and reasoning."

PRATAP: "Shouldn't we reason any more then?"

MASTER: "I am asking you not to indulge in futile reasoning. But reason, by all means, about the Real and the unreal, about what is permanent and what is transitory. You must reason when you are overcome by lust, anger, or grief."

SHASHADHAR: "That is different. It is called reasoning based on discrimination."

MASTER: "Yes, discrimination between the Real and the unreal."

All sat in silence. Again the Master spoke, addressing the pundit.

MASTER: "Formerly many great men used to come here."

SHASHADHAR: "You mean rich people?"

MASTER: "No. Great scholars."

In the mean time the small car of Jagannath had been brought to the verandah. Inside the car were the images of Krishna, Balarama, and Subhadra. They were adorned with flowers, garlands, jewelry, and yellow apparel. Balaram was a sattvic worshipper: there was no outward grandeur in his worship. Outsiders did not even know of this Car Festival at his house. The Master and the devotees went to the verandah. Sri Ramakrishna pulled the car by the rope. Then he began to sing:

See how all Nadia is shaking

Under the waves of Gauranga's love. . . .

He sang again:

Behold, the two brothers<sup>25</sup> have come, who weep while chanting  
Hari's name,

The brothers who, in return for blows, offer to sinners Hari's  
love. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna danced with the devotees. The musician and his party joined the Master in the music and dancing. Soon the whole verandah was

<sup>25</sup> Gauranga and Nityananda.

filled with people. The ladies witnessed this scene of joy from an adjoining room. It appeared as if Chaitanya himself were dancing with his devotees, intoxicated with divine love.

It was not yet dusk. Sri Ramakrishna returned to the drawing-room with the devotees.

MASTER (to Shashadhar): "This is called bhajanananda, the bliss of devotees in the worship of God. Worldly people keep themselves engrossed in the joy of sensual objects, of 'woman and gold'. Through worship devotees receive the grace of God, and then His vision. Then they enjoy Brahmananda, the Bliss of Brahman."

Shashadhar and the devotees listened to these words with rapt attention.

SHASHADHAR (humbly): "Sir, please tell us what kind of yearning gives one this blissful state of mind."

MASTER: "One feels restless for God when one's soul longs for His vision. The guru said to the disciple: 'Come with me. I shall show you what kind of longing will enable you to see God.' Saying this, he took the disciple to a pond and pressed his head under the water. After a few moments he released the disciple and asked, 'How did you feel?' The disciple answered: 'Oh, I felt as if I were dying! I was longing for a breath of air.'"

SHASHADHAR: "Yes! Yes! That's it. I understand it now."

MASTER: "To love God is the essence of the whole thing. Bhakti alone is the essence. Narada said to Rama, 'May I always have pure love for Your Lotus Feet; and may I not be deluded by Your world-bewitching maya!' Rama said to him, 'Ask for some other boon.' 'No,' said Narada, 'I don't want anything else. May I have love for Your Lotus Feet. This is my only prayer.'"

Pundit Shashadhar was ready to leave. Sri Ramakrishna asked a devotee to bring a carriage for the pundit.

SHASHADHAR: "Don't trouble yourself. I shall walk."

MASTER (smiling): "Oh, how can that be? 'You are beyond the reach of even Brahma's meditation.'"

SHASHADHAR: "There is no particular need of my going just now. The only thing is that I shall have to perform my sandhya."

MASTER: "The Divine Mother has taken away my sandhya and other devotions. The purpose of the sandhya is to purify body and mind. I am no longer in that state."

The Master sang the following lines of a song:

When will you learn to lie, O mind, in the abode of Blessedness,  
With Cleanliness and Defilement on either side of you?  
Only when you have found the way  
To keep these wives contentedly under a single roof,  
Will you behold the matchless form of Mother Syama.

Pundit Shashadhar saluted the Master and went away.

RAM: "I visited Shashadhar yesterday. You asked me to."

MASTER: "Did I? I don't remember. But it is nice that you went."



RAM : "The editor of a newspaper" was abusing you."

MASTER : "Suppose he was. What does it matter?"

RAM : "Please listen. Then I began to talk to the editor about you. He wanted to hear more and wouldn't let me go."

It was dusk. Sri Ramakrishna began to chant the names of the Divine Mother, Krishna, Rama, and Hari. The devotees sat in silence. The Master chanted the names in such sweet tones that the hearts of the devotees were deeply touched. That day Balaram's house was like Navadvip when Chaitanya lived there. On the verandah it was like Navadvip, and in the parlour it was like Vrindavan.

That same night Sri Ramakrishna was to go to Dakshineswar. Balaram took him into the inner apartments and served him with refreshments. The ladies of the family saluted the Master.

The devotees were singing kirtan in the drawing-room, awaiting the Master's coming. Presently Sri Ramakrishna came and joined the singers.

The kirtan went on :

Behold, my Gora is dancing ! With the devotees  
He dances in Srivas's courtyard, singing the kirtan.  
Gora says to all, "Repeat the name of Hari !"  
He looks at Gadadhar, and from his red eyes  
Are flowing tears of love over his golden body.

The Master improvised the lines :

Gora is dancing in the kirtan :  
There he dances, Sachi's darling !  
There he dances, my Gauranga !  
There he dances, my soul's beloved !



### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S ROOM

(The Master talked to the devotees from the smaller couch and slept on the larger couch.)



THE ROOM WHERE SRI RAMAKRISHNA  
WAS BORN

## XXVI

### FESTIVAL AT ADHAR'S HOUSE

*Sunday, August 3, 1884*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting in his room in the temple garden at Dakshineswar after his midday meal. A party of Bauls from Shibpur, several devotees from Bhawanipur, Balaram, and M. were in the room. Rakhal, Latu, and Harish were then living with the Master. They too were present.

The Master began the conversation by addressing the Baul musicians from Shibpur.

MASTER : "Yoga is not possible if the mind dwells on 'woman and gold'. The mind of a worldly man generally moves among the three lower centres : those at the navel, at the sexual organ, and at the organ of evacuation. After great effort and spiritual practice the Kundalini is awakened. According to the yogis there are three nerves in the spinal column : Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna. Along the Sushumna are six lotuses, or centres, the lowest being known as the Muladhara. Then come successively Svadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddha, and Ajna. These are the six centres. The Kundalini, when awakened, passes through the lower centres and comes to the Anahata, which is at the heart. It stays there. At that time the mind of the aspirant is withdrawn from the three lower centres. He feels the awakening of Divine Consciousness and sees Light. In mute wonder he sees that radiance and cries out : 'What is this ? What is this ?'

"After passing through the six centres, the Kundalini reaches the thousand-petalled lotus known as the Sahasrara, and the aspirant goes into samadhi.

"According to the Vedas these centres are called 'bhumi', 'planes'. There are seven such planes. The centre at the heart corresponds to the fourth plane of the Vedas. According to the Tantra there is in this centre a lotus called Anahata, with twelve petals.

"The centre known as Visuddha is the fifth plane. This centre is at the throat and has a lotus with sixteen petals. When the Kundalini reaches this plane, the devotee longs to talk and hear only about God. Conversation on worldly subjects, on 'woman and gold', causes him great pain. He leaves a place where people talk of these matters.

"Then comes the sixth plane, corresponding to the centre known as Ajna. This centre is located between the eyebrows and it has a lotus with two petals. When the Kundalini reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God. But still there remains a slight barrier between the devotee and God. It is like a light inside a lantern. You may think you have touched the light, but in reality you cannot because of the barrier of glass.

"And last of all is the seventh plane, which, according to Tantra, is the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus. When the Kundalini arrives there, the aspirant goes into samadhi. In that lotus dwells Satchidananda Siva, the Absolute. There Kundalini, the awakened Power, unites with Siva. This is known as the union of Siva and Sakti.

"When the Kundalini rises to the Sahasrara and the mind goes into samadhi, the aspirant loses all consciousness of the outer world. He can no longer retain his physical body. If milk is poured into his mouth, it runs out again. In that state the life-breath lingers for twenty-one days and then passes out. Entering the 'black waters' of the ocean, the ship never comes back. But the Isvarakotis, such as the Incarnations of God, can come down from this state of samadhi. They can descend from this exalted state because they like to live in the company of devotees and enjoy the love of God. God retains in them the 'ego of Knowledge' or the 'ego of Devotion' so that they may teach men. Their minds move between the sixth and the seventh planes. They run a boat-race back and forth, as it were, between these two planes.

"After attaining samadhi some souls of their own accord keep the 'ego of Knowledge'. But that ego does not create any attachment. It is like a line drawn on the water.

"Hanuman kept the 'servant ego' after realizing God in both His Personal and His Impersonal aspects. He thought of himself as the servant of God. The great sages, such as Narada, Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana, and Sanatkumara, after attaining the Knowledge of Brahman, kept the 'servant ego' and the 'ego of Devotion'. They are like big steamships, which not only cross the ocean themselves but carry many passengers to the other shore.

"There are two classes of paramahansas, one affirming the formless Reality and the other affirming God with form. Trailinga Swami believed in the formless Reality. Paramahansas like him care for their own good alone; they feel satisfied if they themselves attain the goal.

"But those paramahansas who believe in God with form keep the love of God even after attaining the Knowledge of Brahman, so that they may teach spiritual truth to others. They are like a pitcher brimful of water. Part of the water may be poured into another pitcher. These perfected souls describe to others the various spiritual disciplines by which they have realized God. They do this only to teach others and to help them in spiritual life. With great effort men dig a well for drinking-water, using spades and baskets for the purpose. After the digging is over, some throw the spades and other implements into the well, not needing them any more. But some put them away near the well, so that others may use them.



"Some eat mangoes secretly and remove all trace of them by wiping their mouths with a towel. But some share the fruit with others. There are sages who, even after attaining Knowledge, work to help others and also to enjoy the Bliss of God in the company of devotees. 'I want to eat sugar. I don't want to be sugar.'"

"The gopis of Vrindavan, too, attained the Knowledge of Brahman ; but they were not seeking It. They wanted to enjoy God, looking on themselves as His mother, His friend, His handmaid, or His lover."

The Bauls from Shibpur began to sing to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. A line in the first song was :

We are sinners : redeem us, O merciful Lord !

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " It is the attitude of a beginner to worship God out of fear. Please sing about God-realization—songs expressing divine joy.

(*To Rakhal*) " How well they sang that song the other day at Nabin Niyogi's house : 'Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss' ! While singing religious songs one should not constantly refer to one's worries. One should rather feel joyous and ecstatic as one chants God's name."

A DEVOTEE : " Sir, won't you sing ? "

MASTER : " What shall I sing ? Well, I may sing when the spirit moves me."

After a few minutes the Master began to sing. His eyes were turned upward. He sang :

Behold the waves of Gora's ecstatic love ;  
Under them all the universe lies submerged !  
And in his love I, too, long to be drowned.  
O friend, Gauranga's love has swallowed me ;  
Who else feels for our misery like Gauranga,  
Dragging us from the mire of worldliness ?

He sang again :

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty ;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love. . . .

Then he sang about the Divine Mother :

Can everyone have the vision of Syama ? Is Kali's treasure for everyone ?

Oh, what a pity my foolish mind will not see what is true ! . . .

He continued :

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight  
To the blue lotus flower of Mother Syama's feet. . . .

And again :

O Mother, what a machine<sup>1</sup> is this that Thou hast made !  
What pranks Thou playest with this toy  
Three and a half cubits high ! . . .

<sup>1</sup> The human body.

"Then comes the sixth plane, corresponding to the centre known as Ajna. This centre is located between the eyebrows and it has a lotus with two petals. When the Kundalini reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God. But still there remains a slight barrier between the devotee and God. It is like a light inside a lantern. You may think you have touched the light, but in reality you cannot because of the barrier of glass.

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Three and a half cubits high ! . . .

<sup>1</sup> The human body.

As Sri Ramakrishna sang the last song he went into samadhi. The devotees sat speechless, gazing at his radiant figure. After some time he regained partial consciousness of the world and began to talk to the Divine Mother.

The Master said, "Mother, please come down from up there." Did he feel his mind still lingering in the seventh plane of consciousness, the thousand-petalled lotus of the Sahasrara?

"Please do come down", he said. "Don't torment me that way. Be still, Mother, and sit down."

"O Mother, everybody's future is determined by the tendencies of his previous births. What shall I say to these people? Nothing can be achieved without discrimination and renunciation."

Sri Ramakrishna had now regained full consciousness of the world, and he continued: "There are many kinds of renunciation. One of them may be called 'markatavairagya', 'monkey renunciation'. It is a false renunciation stimulated by the afflictions of the world. That renunciation doesn't last long. Then there is real renunciation. A man with everything in the world, lacking nothing, feels all to be unreal."

"It is not possible to acquire renunciation all at once. The time factor must be taken into account. But it is also true that a man should hear about it. When the right time comes, he will say to himself, 'Oh yes, I heard about this.'"

"You must also remember another thing. By constantly hearing about renunciation one's desire for worldly objects gradually wears away. One should take rice-water in small doses to get rid of the intoxication of liquor. Then one gradually becomes normal."

"An aspirant entitled to the Knowledge of God is very rare. It is said in the *Gita* that one in thousands desires to know God, and again, that among thousands who have such a desire, only one is able to know Him."

A devotee quoted the text from the *Gita*.

MASTER: "As your attachment to the world diminishes, your spiritual knowledge will increase. Attachment to the world means attachment to 'woman and gold'."

"It is not given to everybody to feel prema, ecstatic love of God. Chaitanya experienced it. An ordinary man can at the most experience bhava. Only the Isvarakotis, such as Divine Incarnations, experience prema. When prema is awakened the devotee not only feels the world to be unreal, but forgets even the body, which everyone loves so intensely."

"In a Persian book it is said that inside the skin is the flesh, inside the flesh the bone, inside the bone the marrow, and so on, but that prema is the innermost of all. One becomes soft and tender through prema. On account of this prema, Krishna became tribhanga.<sup>2</sup>

"Prema is the rope by which you can tether God, as it were. Whenever you want to see Him you have merely to pull the rope. Whenever you call Him, He will appear before you."

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "bent in three places". The usual standing figure of Krishna is bent in three places, namely, the neck, the waist, and the knees.



"The mature stage of bhakti is bhava. When one attains it one remains speechless, thinking of Satchidananda. The feeling of an ordinary man can go only that far. When bhava ripens it becomes mahabhava. Prema is the last. You know the difference between a green mango and a ripe one. Unalloyed love of God is the essential thing. All else is unreal.

"Once Rama was pleased with a prayer of Narada and told him to ask for a boon. Narada prayed for pure love and said further, 'O Rama, please grant that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya.' Rama said : 'That is all right. But ask for something else.' Narada replied : 'I don't want anything else. I pray only for pure love.'

"How can a devotee attain such love ? First, the company of holy men. That awakens sraddha, faith in God. Then comes nishtha, single-minded devotion to the Ideal. In that stage the devotee does not like to hear anything but talk about God. He performs only those acts that please God. After nishtha comes bhakti, devotion to God ; then comes bhava. Next mahabhava, then prema, and last of all the attainment of God Himself. Only for Isvarakotis, such as the Incarnations, is it possible to have mahabhava or prema.

"The knowledge of a worldly person, the knowledge of a devotee, and the Knowledge of an Incarnation are by no means of the same degree. The knowledge of a worldly person is like the light of an oil lamp, which shows only the inside of a room. Through such knowledge he eats and drinks, attends to household duties, protects his body, brings up his children, and so on.

"The knowledge of a devotee is like the light of the moon, which illumines objects both inside and outside a room. But such light does not enable him to see a distant or a very minute object.

"The Knowledge of an Incarnation of God is like the light of the sun. Through that light the incarnation sees everything, inside and outside, big and small.

"The mind of a worldly person is, no doubt, like muddy water ; but it can be made clear by a purifying agent. Discrimination and renunciation are the purifying agent."

The Master spoke to the devotees from Shibpur.

MASTER : "Have you any questions to ask ?"

A DEVOTEE : "We have listened to your words."

MASTER : "Yes, it is good to listen to these things. But nothing will happen except at the right time. What can quinine do for a fever patient when he runs a high temperature ? Only when his temperature comes down through the use of 'fever mixture' or a purgative should quinine be prescribed. There are patients who get rid of their fever even without quinine. A child said to his mother, when he was put to bed, 'Mother, please wake me up when I feel the call of nature.' The mother said : 'My child, I shall not have to wake you. The urge itself will wake you.'

"Different kinds of people come here. Some come by boat with the devotees. But they do not enjoy spiritual talk. They keep nudging their friends and whispering : 'When shall we leave here ? When are we going ?' If the

friends show no sign of getting up, they say, 'We would rather wait for you in the boat.'

"Those who have a human body for the first time need the experience of sense enjoyments. Spiritual consciousness is not awakened unless certain duties have been performed."

The Master was going to the pine-grove. With a smile he said to M., on the semicircular porch, "Well, what do you think of my state of mind?"

M. (*smiling*): "On the surface you are very simple, but inwardly very deep. It is extremely difficult to understand you."

MASTER (*smiling*): "True. It is like the cement floor of a house. People see only the outer surface and do not know how many materials there are under it."

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Balaram and several other devotees got into a country boat to return to Calcutta. It was ebb-tide in the Ganges. A gentle breeze was blowing from the south, covering the bosom of the sacred river with ripples. M. looked at the scene a long time. As the boat disappeared in the direction of Calcutta, he came back to the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna was going to the pine-grove. A beautiful, dark rain-cloud was to be seen in the northwest. The Master asked M.: "Do you think it will rain? Please bring my umbrella." M. brought the umbrella. Reaching the Panchavati, the Master said to Latu, who also accompanied him, "Why do you look so sickly?"

LATU: "I can hardly eat anything."

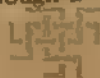
MASTER: "Is that the only reason? It is also a bad time of the year. Are you meditating too much? (To M.) I have a request to make of you. Please tell Baburam to stay with me a day or two during Rakhal's absence. Otherwise I shall feel very unhappy."

M: "Yes, sir. I shall tell him."

Sri Ramakrishna asked M. whether he thought that Baburam was guileless.

Presently the Master left them, going in the direction of the pine-trees. After a few minutes M. and Latu, standing in the Panchavati, saw the Master coming back toward them. Behind him the sky was black with the rain-cloud. Its reflection in the Ganges made the water darker. The disciples felt that the Master was God Incarnate, a Divine Child five years old, radiant with the smile of innocence and purity. Around him were the sacred trees of the Panchavati under which he had practised spiritual discipline and had beheld visions of God. At his feet flowed the sacred river Ganges, the destroyer of man's sins. The presence of this God-man charged the trees, shrubs, flowers, plants, and temples with spiritual fervour and divine joy.

Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room and sat on the small couch. He began to praise a medicine that a certain brahmachari had prepared for him. Referring to this man, Hazra said: "He is now entangled in many worldly anxieties. What a shame! Look at Nabai Chaitanya of Konnagar. Though a householder, he has put on a red cloth."



MASTER : " What shall I say ? I clearly see that it is God Himself who has assumed all these human forms. Therefore I cannot take any body to task."

HAZRA : " Narendra is again involved in a lawsuit "

MASTER : " He doesn't believe in Sakti, the Divine Mother. If one assumes a human body, one must recognize Her."

HAZRA : " Narendra says : ' If I believed in Sakti, all would follow me. Therefore I cannot. '"

MASTER : " But it is not good for him to go to the extreme of denying the Divine Mother. He is now under Sakti's jurisdiction. Even a judge, while giving evidence in a case, comes down and stands in the witness-box."

(To M.) " Have you seen Narendra lately ? "

M : " Not during the last few days."

MASTER : " See him and bring him here in a carriage."

(To Hazra) " Well, what is his relation to this [meaning himself] ? "

HAZRA : " He expects help from you."

MASTER : " And what about Bhavanath ? Would he come here so frequently if he didn't have good tendencies ? What about Harish and Latu ? They always meditate. Why is that ? "

HAZRA : " That's right. Why should they devote all their time to meditation ? It is quite a different thing for them to stay here to attend to your personal needs."

MASTER : " Possibly you are right. Perhaps others may take their place now."

Hazra left the room, leaving the Master alone with M.

MASTER : " Does what I say in the state of ecstasy attract people ? "

M : " Oh, yes. Very much."

MASTER : " What do people think of me ? Do they think anything in particular about me when they see me in that condition ? "

M : " We feel in you a wonderful synthesis of knowledge, love, and renunciation, and on the surface a natural spontaneity. Many divine experiences have passed, like huge steamboats, through the deep of your inner consciousness ; still you maintain outwardly this utter simplicity. Many cannot understand it, but a few are attracted by this state alone."

MASTER : " There is a sect of Vaishnavas known as the Ghoshpara, who describe God as the ' Sahaja ', the ' Simple One '. They say further that a man cannot recognize this ' Simple One ' unless he too is simple. (To M.) Have I any ego ? "

M : " Yes, sir. A little. You have kept it to preserve your body, and to enjoy divine love in the company of the devotees and impart spiritual knowledge to them. Further, you have kept this trace of ego by praying to the Divine Mother for it."

MASTER : " No. I have not kept it. It is God Himself who has left it in me. Can you tell me how I appear in the state of samadhi ? "

M : " As you said a little while ago, you see the form of God when your mind rises to the ' sixth plane '. When you speak after that, your mind comes down to the ' fifth plane '."

MASTER : "It is God who does all these things. I do not know anything."

M : "That is why you attract people so much. Sir, I have a question to ask. There are two opinions in the scriptures. According to one Purana, Krishna is Chidatma, the Absolute, and Radha is Chitsakti, Its Divine Power ; but according to another, Krishna Himself is Kali, the Primordial Energy."

MASTER : "This second view is held in the *Devi Purana*. According to it, Kali Herself has become Krishna. But what difference does it make ? God is infinite, and infinite are the ways to reach Him."

M. remained speechless with wonder for a few moments and then said : "Oh, now I understand. As you say, the important thing is to climb to the roof. Our goal will be achieved if we can accomplish it by following any of the means—a rope or a pole."

MASTER : "It is through the grace of God that you have understood that. Without His grace doubt is never cleared up."

"The important thing is somehow to cultivate devotion to God and love for Him. What is the use of knowing many things ? It is enough to cultivate love of God by following any of the paths. When you have this love, you are sure to attain God. Afterwards, if it is necessary, God will explain everything to you and tell you about the other paths as well. It is enough for you to develop love of God. You have no need of many opinions and discussions. You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Enjoy them to your heart's content. You don't need to count the branches and leaves on the trees. It is wise to follow the attitude of Hanuman : 'I do not know the day of the week, the phase of the moon, or the position of the stars ; I only contemplate Rama.'"

M : "I now desire that my activities may be much reduced and that I may devote myself greatly to God."

MASTER : "Ah ! Certainly your desire will be fulfilled. But a jnani can live unattached in the world."

M : "True, sir. But one needs special power to lead an unattached life."

MASTER : "That is also true. But perhaps you wanted the worldly life. Krishna had been enshrined in Radha's heart ; but Radha wanted to sport with Him in human form. Hence all the episodes of Vrindavan. Now you should pray to God that your worldly duties may be reduced. And you will achieve the goal if you renounce mentally."

M : "But mental renunciation is prescribed for those who cannot give up the world outwardly. For superior devotees total renunciation is enjoined—both outer and inner."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent a few minutes and then resumed the conversation.

MASTER : "How did you like what I said about renunciation a little while ago ?"

M : "Very much, sir."

MASTER : "Tell me, what is the meaning of renunciation ?"

M : "Renunciation does not mean simply dispassion for the world. It means dispassion for the world and also longing for God."



MASTER : " You are right. You no doubt need money for your worldly life ; but don't worry too much about it. The wise course is to accept what comes of its own accord. Don't take too much trouble to save money. Those who surrender their hearts and souls to God, those who are devoted to Him and have taken refuge in Him, do not worry much about money. As they earn, so they spend. The money comes in one way and goes out the other. This is what the *Gita* describes as 'accepting what comes of its own accord'."

The Master referred to Haripada and said, " He came here the other day."

M : " He knows how to sing the stories of the Purana. He sings melodiously about the life of Prahlada and the nativity of Sri Krishna."

MASTER : " Is that so ? That day I looked into his eyes. They had an inward look. I asked him whether he meditated a great deal, but he sat with his eyes cast down and didn't answer. Then I said to him, ' Look here, don't strain yourself too much.'"

It was now dusk. Sri Ramakrishna, as was usual with him during this part of the day, chanted the names of God and turned his mind to contemplation. Soon the moon rose in the sky. The temples, courtyards, and trees were bathed in its silvery light, and millions of broken moons played on the rippling surface of the Ganges. Rakhal and M. were with the Master in his room.

MASTER (to M.) : " Baburam says, ' Oh, the worldly life ! God forbid ! ' "

M : " His opinion is based on mere hearsay. What does he know of the world ? He is a mere child."

MASTER : " Yes, that is true. Have you noticed Niranjan ? He is utterly artless."

M : " Yes, sir. His very appearance attracts people. How expressive his eyes are ! "

MASTER : " Not only his eyes, but his entire person. His relatives proposed that he marry. At this he said, ' Why are you going to drown me ? ' (With a smile) Tell me this. People say that a man finds great pleasure in the company of his wife after the hard work of the day."

M : " That is no doubt true of those who think that way. (To Rakhal, with a smile) We are now being examined. This is a leading question."

Both Rakhal and M. were married.

MASTER (with a smile) : " A mother says : ' I shall heave a sigh of relief if I can procure a " shade-tree " ' for my son. He will rest in its shade when scorched by the heat of the world.' "

M : " True, sir. But there are parents and parents. A father who is spiritually illumined doesn't give his children in marriage. If he does, his is a fine spirituality ! "

Adhar Sen arrived from Calcutta and saluted the Master. After a few minutes he went to the temple of Kali, where M. followed him.

A little later M. was sitting at the bathing-ghat on the Ganges. The flood-tide had just set in. As he listened to the waters lapping against the

<sup>3</sup> The word means " wife ".

bank, many pictures of Sri Ramakrishna's divine life flitted before his mind : the Master's deep samadhi, his constant ecstasy, his joy in the love of God, his untiring discourse on spiritual life, his genuine love for the devotees, and, above all, his childlike simplicity. Who was this man ? Was it God who had embodied Himself on earth for the sake of His devotees ?

Adhar and M. returned to the Master's room. Adhar had been to Chittagong, in East Bengal, on official duty. He was telling the Master about his visit to the Chandranath Hills and Sitakunda, sacred places of Chittagong.

ADHAR : " Near Sitakunda I visited a well where I saw fire in the water. It is always burning on the water with leaping tongues."

MASTER : " How is that possible ? "

ADHAR : " The water contains phosphorous."

Presently Ram Chatterji entered the room. The Master said some kind words about him to Adhar.

MASTER : " Ram's presence in the temple garden has relieved us of many anxieties. He searches out Harish, Latu, and the others at meal-time. Very often they are absorbed in meditation in some corner of the temple garden. It is Ram who sees that they eat at the proper time."

*Saturday, September 6, 1884*

About three o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was seated in Adhar's parlour on the second floor. Narendra, the Mukherji brothers, Bhavanath, M., Hazra, and other devotees were with the Master.

Arrangements were being made for Narendra to sing. While he was tuning the tanpura, one of the strings snapped, and the Master exclaimed, " Oh ! What have you done ? " Narendra then tuned the drums. The Master said to him, " You are beating that drum, and I feel as if someone were slapping my cheek."

Referring to the kirtan, Narendra said : " There is not much rhythm in the kirtan. That's why it is so popular and people love it so much."

MASTER : " How silly ! People like it because it is so tender and full of pathos."

Narend-a sang :

Sweet is Thy name, O Refuge of the humble !  
It falls like sweetest nectar on our ears  
And comforts us, Beloved of our soul ! . . .

He sang again :

O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain ?  
Down the path of hope I gaze with longing, day and night.  
Thou art the Lord of all the worlds, and I but a beggar here ;  
How can I ask of Thee to come and dwell within my heart ?  
My poor heart's humble cottage door is standing open wide ;  
Be gracious, Lord, and enter there but once, and quench its thirst !

MASTER (to Hazra, smiling) : " That was the first song he sang for me."

Narendra sang one or two more songs. Then Vaishnavcharan sang, describing the grief of the gopis at the sight of Krishna as king of Mathura :

O Hari, how shall we know You now ?  
In Mathura's royal splendour You have forgotten us. . . .

MASTER : " Won't you sing that one—' O vina, sing Lord Hari's name ' ? "

Vaishnavcharan sang :

O vina, sing Lord Hari's name !  
Without the blessing of His feet  
You cannot know the final Truth.  
The name of Hari slays all grief ;  
Sing Hari's name ! Sing Krishna's name !  
If only Hari shows His grace,  
Then I shall never be distressed.  
O vina, sing His name but once ;  
No earthly gem is half so rare.  
Govinda says : In vain my days  
Have passed. No longer may I float  
Here in life's trackless ocean waste !

While listening to the song, the Master became abstracted. Saying " Ah me ! Ah me ! ", he went into samadhi. The devotees were sitting around him, their eyes riveted on him. The room was filled with people.

The musician sang again. As he improvised new lines describing ecstatic love of God, the Master stood up and danced. He himself improvised lines and sang them with outstretched arms. Soon he went into samadhi and sat down, with his head resting on the bolster in front of him. The musician was also carried away with emotion and sang new songs. Sri Ramakrishna again stood up and began to dance. The devotees could not control themselves. They too danced with the Master. While dancing, Sri Ramakrishna every now and then went into deep samadhi. When he was in the deepest samadhi he could not utter a word and his whole body remained transfixed. The devotees danced encircling him. After a while, regaining partial consciousness, he danced with the strength of a lion, intoxicated with ecstatic love. But even then he could not utter a word. Finally, regaining more of the consciousness of the world, he sang again, improvising the lines. An intense spiritual atmosphere was created in Adhar's parlour. At the sound of the loud music a large crowd had gathered in the street.

Sri Ramakrishna danced a long time in the company of the devotees. When he resumed his seat, still tinged with the lingering glow of divine fervour, he asked Narendra to sing " O Mother, make me mad with Thy love ".

Narendra sang :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !  
What need have I of knowledge or reason ? . . .

MASTER : " And that one—' Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness '."

Narendra sang :

Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness waves of ecstatic love arise :  
Rapture divine ! Play of God's Bliss !  
Oh, how enthralling ! . . .

MASTER : " And that one too—' In Wisdom's firmament '. Perhaps it is too long. Do you think so ? All right, sing it slowly."

Narendra sang :

In Wisdom's firmament the moon of Love is rising full,  
And Love's flood-tide, in surging waves, is flowing everywhere.  
O Lord, how full of bliss Thou art ! Victory unto Thee ! . . .

MASTER : " And won't you sing that one—' The Wine of Heavenly Bliss ' ? "

Narendra sang :

Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss !  
Roll on the ground and weep, chanting Hari's sweet name !  
Fill the arching heavens with your deep lion roar,  
Singing Hari's sweet name ! With both your arms upraised,  
Dance in the name of Hari and give His name to all.  
Swim by day and by night in the bliss of Hari's love ;  
Slay desire with His name, and blessed be your life !

The Master improvised, " Be drunk with prema and weep, chanting Hari's sweet name." And, " Be mad with divine fervour and weep, chanting His name."

Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees rested awhile. Narendra said to the Master in a low voice, " Will you kindly sing that one ? "

MASTER : " My voice has become a little hoarse."

After a few minutes he asked Narendra, " Which one ? "

NARENDRA : " ' Gaur, whose beauty delights the world.' "

Sri Ramakrishna sang, describing the beauty of Sri Chaitanya :

Who has brought Gaur to Nadia—  
Gaur, whose beauty delights the world ?  
His face, covered with ringlets of hair,  
Shines like lightning against a dark cloud. . . .

Again he sang, this time about the grief of a gopi at her separation from Sri Krishna :

I have not found my Krishna, O friend ! How cheerless my home  
without Him !  
Ah, if Krishna could only be the hair upon my head,  
Carefully I should braid it then, and deck it with bakul-flowers ;  
Carefully I should fashion the braids out of my Krishna-hair.  
Krishna is black, and black is my hair ; black would be one with  
black.

Ah, if Krishna could only be the ring I wear in my nose,  
Always from my nose He would hang, and my two lips could  
touch Him.  
But it can never be, alas ! Why should I idly dream ?  
Why should Krishna care at all to be the ring in my nose ?



Ah, if Krishna could only be the bracelets on my arms,  
 Always He would cling to my wrists, and proudly I should walk,  
 Shaking my bracelets to make them sound, shaking my arms to  
 show them;  
 Down the king's highway I should walk, wearing my Krishna-  
 bracelets.

The music was over. The Master began to talk with the devotees.

MASTER (*smiling*): "Hazra danced."

NARENDRA: "Yes, a little."

MASTER: "A little?"

NARENDRA: "Yes, His belly danced too." (*All laugh.*)

Pundit Shashadhar's host had been thinking of inviting the Master for dinner.

MASTER: "I have heard that his host is not an honest man. He is immoral."

NARENDRA: "That is why you didn't drink the water he touched. It happened the first day you met Shashadhar at his house. How did you come to know he was immoral?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Hazra knows of another instance. It happened at Sihore in Hriday's house."

HAZRA: "The man was a Vaishnava. He came with me to see you [meaning Sri Ramakrishna]. As soon as he sat in front of you, you turned your back on him."

MASTER: "We learnt later that he led an immoral life. (*To Narendra*) You used to say, at first, that these were all hallucinations."

NARENDRA: "How was I to know? Now I see that you are always right."

Adhar had prepared a feast for the Master and the devotees, and now he invited them to the meal. The Master said to the Mukherji brothers: "What? Won't you eat?" They said humbly, "Please excuse us."

MASTER: "But why? You are doing everything else. Why this hesitation only about eating the meal?"

Adhar was a low-caste Hindu. Therefore some of the Master's brahmin devotees hesitated to eat at his house. They came to their senses at last when they saw Sri Ramakrishna himself eating.

It was about nine o'clock. The Master was resting in the drawing-room with the devotees. He would soon leave for Dakshineswar.

The Mukherji brothers had arranged with a singer of kirtan to entertain the Master the following day. Ram was taking singing-lessons from this musician. Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra to come to Dakshineswar to hear the kirtan.

MASTER (*to Narendra*): "Come tomorrow, won't you?"

NARENDRA: "I shall try, sir."

MASTER: "You can bathe there and also take your meal. (*Pointing to M.*) He may dine there too. (*To M.*) Are you quite well now? I hope you are not on a diet."

M : "No, sir. I shall come."

Nityagopal was living at Vrindavan. Chunilal had returned from Vrindavan only a few days before, and the Master inquired about Nityagopal.

As Sri Ramakrishna was about to leave, M. saluted him, touching the Master's feet with his forehead. The Master said to him tenderly : "Then I shall see you tomorrow. Narendra ! Bhavanath ! Please come tomorrow." Then with several devotees he set out for Dakshineswar.

The other devotees returned home in the moonlit night, cherishing in their hearts the Master's ecstatic music and dancing.

## XXVII

### AT DAKSHINESWAR

*Sunday, September 7, 1884*

**I**T WAS ABOUT ELEVEN O'CLOCK. The Master was sitting in his room at Dakshineswar. He had not yet taken his midday meal.

Arrangements had been made with the musician Shyamdas to entertain the Master and the devotees with his kirtan. Baburam, M., Manomohan, Bhavanath, Kishori, Chunilal, Haripada, the Mukherji brothers, Ram, Surendra, Tarak, Niranjan, and others arrived at the temple garden. Latu, Harish, and Hazra were staying with the Master.

When M. saluted Sri Ramakrishna, the Master asked : "Where is Narendra ? Isn't he coming ?" M. told him that Narendra could not come.

A brahmin devotee was reading to the Master from a book of devotional songs by Ramprasad. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to continue. The brahmin read a song, the first line of which was : "O Mother, put on Thy clothes."

MASTER : "Stop, please ! These ideas are outlandish and bizarre. Read something that will awaken bhakti."

The brahmin read :

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ?  
Even the six darsanas are powerless to reveal Her. . . .

MASTER (*to M.*) : "I got a pain because I lay too long on one side while in samadhi yesterday at Adhar's house ; so now I'll take Baburam with me when I visit the houses of the devotees. He is a sympathetic soul."

With these words the Master sang :

How shall I open my heart, O friend ?  
It is forbidden me to speak.  
I am about to die, for lack of a kindred soul  
To understand my misery.

- Simply by looking in his eyes,  
I find the beloved of my heart ;  
But rare is such a soul, who swims in ecstatic bliss  
On the high tide of heavenly love.

MASTER : "The Bauls sing songs like that. They also sing another kind of song :





himself. He doesn't show outwardly any sign of spirituality. He doesn't even utter the name of Hari. The second means that he is not attached to woman. He has completely mastered his senses.

"The Bauls do not like the worship of an image. They want a living man. That is why one of their sects is called the Kartabhaja. They worship the karta, that is to say, the guru, as God.

"You see how many opinions there are about God. Each opinion is a path. There are innumerable opinions and innumerable paths leading to God."

BHAVANATH : "Then what should we do?"

MASTER : "You must stick to one path with all your strength. A man can reach the roof of a house by stone stairs or a ladder or a rope-ladder or a rope or even by a bamboo pole. But he cannot reach the roof if he sets foot now on one and now on another. He should firmly follow one path. Likewise, in order to realize God a man must follow one path with all his strength.

"But you must regard other views as so many paths leading to God. You should not feel that your path is the only right path and that other paths are wrong. You mustn't bear malice toward others.

"Well, to what path do I belong? Keshab Sen used to say to me : 'You belong to our path. You are gradually accepting the ideal of the formless God.' Shashadhar says that I belong to his path. Vijay, too, says that I belong to his—Vijay's—path."

Sri Ramakrishna walked toward the Panchavati with M. and a few other devotees. It was midday and time for the flood-tide in the Ganges.

They waited in the Panchavati to see the bore of the tide.

MASTER (to the devotees) : "The ebb-tide and flood-tide are indeed amazing. But notice one thing. Near the sea you see ebb-tide and flood-tide in a river, but far away from the sea the river flows in one direction only. What does this mean? Try to apply its significance to your spiritual life. Those who live very near God feel within them the currents of bhakti, bhava, and the like. In the case of a few—the Isvarakotis, for instance—one sees even mahabhava and prema.

(To M.) "What is the explanation of the ebb-tide and flood-tide?"

M : "According to Western astronomy, they are due to the attraction of the sun and the moon."

In order to explain it, M. drew figures on the earth and began to show the Master the movement of the earth, the sun, and the moon. The Master looked at the figures for a minute and said : "Stop, please ! It gives me a headache."

Presently the tide came up the Ganges. They heard the sound of the rushing water. The tide struck the bank of the river and flowed toward the north. Sri Ramakrishna looked at it intently and exclaimed like a child : "Look at that boat ! I wonder what is going to happen to it."

The Master and M. sat down for a while in the Panchavati, Sri Ramakrishna placing his umbrella on the cement platform. The conversation turned to Narayan. The boy was a student. Sri Ramakrishna looked upon him as Narayana, God Himself, and was very fond of him.

MASTER : "Have you noticed Naran's<sup>1</sup> nature ? He can mix with all, old and young. One cannot do this without a special power. Besides, all love him. Is he really artless ?"

M : "I think so."

MASTER : "I understand that he goes to your place. Is that so ?"

M : "Yes, sir. He has visited me once or twice."

MASTER : "Will you give him a rupee ? Or shall I ask Kali<sup>2</sup> about it ?"

M : "Very well, sir. I shall give him the money."

MASTER : "That's fine. It is good to help those who yearn for God. Thus one makes good use of one's money. What will you gain by spending everything on your family ?"

Kishori had several children. His salary was too small to support his family. Sri Ramakrishna said to M. : "Naran said he would get a job for Kishori. Please remind him of it."

The Master walked away in the direction of the pine-grove. Returning to the Panchavati, he said to M. : "Please ask someone to spread a mat outside my room. I shall lie down a few minutes. I am coming presently."

When the Master returned to his room, he could not find his umbrella and exclaimed : "You have all forgotten the umbrella ! The busybody doesn't see a thing even when it is very near him. A man went to a friend's house to light the charcoal for his smoke, though all the time he had a lighted lantern in his hand. Another man looked everywhere for his towel. Finally he discovered that it had been on his shoulder all the time."

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. The Master ate the prasad from the Kali temple. Then he wanted to rest awhile, but the devotees were still sitting in his room. They were asked to go out, and then the Master lay down. He said to Baburam, "Come here ; sit near me." Baburam answered, "I am preparing betel-leaf." The Master said, "Put your betel-leaf aside."

The devotees sat under the bakul-tree in the Panchavati. Tarak, who had just returned from Vrindavan, told them stories of his visit.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna was seated again on his couch, the devotees sitting on the floor. Shyamdas was singing with his party. He sang of the gopis' grief at their separation from Sri Krishna :

Dry as a desert seemed the happy lake to them :  
The chatak died of thirst, gazing toward the clouds.

The Master became somewhat abstracted, but the musician could not create a spiritual atmosphere. Sri Ramakrishna asked Nabai of Konnagar to sing a kirtan. Nabai was Manomohan's uncle. He lived on the bank of the Ganges, devoting his time to prayer and meditation, and was a frequent visitor of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar.

Nabai began the kirtan in a loud voice. The Master left the couch and began to dance. Immediately Nabai and other devotees began to dance around him. The atmosphere became intense with spiritual fervour.

<sup>1</sup> Short for Narayan, a young disciple of the Master.

<sup>2</sup> A devotee of the Master.

After the kirtan, Sri Ramakrishna resumed his seat. With great feeling he began to sing of the Divine Mother, his eyes turned upward :

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,  
Do not deprive Thy worthless child of bliss !  
My mind knows nothing but Thy Lotus Feet.  
The King of Death scowls at me terribly ;  
Tell me, Mother, what shall I say to him ? . . .

He sang again :

As is a man's meditation, so is his feeling of love ;  
As is a man's feeling of love, so is his gain ;  
And faith is the root of all. . . .

He continued :

This world, O Mother, is Thy madhouse ! What can I say of all  
Thy virtues ?  
Setting aside Thine elephant, Thou roamest about on foot ;  
Putting off Thy gems and pearls, O self-willed Mother,  
Thou dost adorn Thy comely neck with a garland of human heads.  
Now Thou must rescue Ramprasad out of the forest of this world.

Again he sang :

Why should I go to Ganga or Gaya, to Kasi, Kanchi, or Prabhas,  
So long as I can breathe my last with Kali's name upon my  
lips ? . . .

And again :

Dwell, O mind, within yourself ;  
Enter no other's home.  
If you but seek there, you will find  
All you are searching for. . . .

And then :

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight  
To the blue lotus flower of Mother Syama's feet. . . .

And then :

Cherish my precious Mother Syama  
Tenderly within, O mind ;  
May you and I alone behold Her,  
Letting no one else intrude. . . .

As the Master sang this last song he stood up. He was almost intoxicated, with divine love. Again and again he said to the devotees, "Cherish my precious Mother Syama tenderly within." Then he danced and sang :

Is Kali, my Mother, really black ?  
The Naked One, of blackest hue,  
Lights the Lotus of the Heart. . . .





It was about dusk. Many of the devotees took their leave. A lamp was lighted in Sri Ramakrishna's room and incense was burnt. After some time the moon came out, flooding the sky with its light.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his couch. He was in a spiritual mood, absorbed in contemplation of the Divine Mother. Now and then he chanted Her hallowed name. Adhar was sitting on the floor. M. and Niranjan, too, were there. Sri Ramakrishna began to talk to Adhar.

MASTER : " What ! You have come just now ! We have had so much kirtan and dancing. Shyamdas began the kirtan. He is Ram's music teacher. But I didn't enjoy his singing very much ; I didn't feel like dancing. Later I heard about his character. I was told that he had as many mistresses as there are hairs on a man's head.

" Didn't you get the job ? "

Adhar held the post of deputy magistrate, a government post that carried with it great prestige. He earned three hundred rupees a month. He had applied for the office of vice-chairman of the Calcutta Municipality. The salary attached to this office was one thousand rupees. In order to secure it, Adhar had interviewed many influential people in Calcutta.

MASTER (to M. and Niranjan) : " Hazra said to me, ' Please pray to the Divine Mother for Adhar, that he may secure the job.' Adhar made the same request to me. I said to the Mother : ' O Mother, Adhar has been visiting You. May he get the job if it pleases You.' But at the same time I said to Her : ' How small-minded he is ! He is praying to You for things like that and not for Knowledge and Devotion.'

(To Adhar) " Why did you dance attendance on all those small-minded people ? You have seen so much ; you have heard so much ! ' After reading the entire *Ramayana*, to ask whose wife Sita is ! "

ADHAR : " A man cannot but do these things if he wants to lead a householder's life. You haven't forbidden us to, have you ? "

MASTER : " Nivritti alone is good, and not pravritti.' Once, when I was in a God-intoxicated state, I was asked to go to the manager of the Kali temple to sign the receipt for my salary.' They all do it here. But I said to the manager : ' I cannot do that. I am not asking for any salary. You may give it to someone else if you want.' I am the servant of God alone. Whom else shall I serve ? Mallick noticed the late hours of my meals and arranged for a cook. He gave me one rupee for a month's expenses. That embarrassed me. I had to run to him whenever he sent for me. It would have been quite a different thing if I had gone to him of my own accord.

" In leading the worldly life one has to humour mean-minded people and do many such things. After the attainment of my exalted state, I noticed how things were around me and said to the Divine Mother, ' O Mother, please change the direction of my mind right now, so that I may not have to flatter rich people.'

<sup>3</sup> Nivritti and pravritti mean, respectively, inwardness of the mind and its inclination to outer enjoyment.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Ramakrishna was then acting as the salaried priest of the Kali temple.

(To Adhar) "Be satisfied with the job you have. People hanker after a post paying fifty or a hundred rupees, and you are earning three hundred rupees! You are a deputy magistrate. I saw a deputy magistrate at Kamar-pukur. His name was Ishwar Ghoshal. He had a turban on his head. Men's very bones trembled before him. I remember having seen him during my boyhood. Is a deputy magistrate a person to be trifled with?"

"Serve him whom you are already serving. The mind becomes soiled by serving but one master. And to serve five masters!"

"Once a woman became attached to a Mussalman and invited him to her room. But he was a righteous person; he said to her that he wanted to use the toilet and must go home to get his water-jar for water. The woman offered him her own, but he said: 'No, that will not do. I shall use the jar to which I have already exposed myself. I cannot expose myself before a new one.' With these words he went away. That brought the woman to her senses. She understood that a new water-jar, in her case, signified a paramour."

Narendra was in straitened circumstances on account of his father's unexpected death. He had been seeking a job to maintain his mother, brothers, and sisters. He had served a few days as headmaster of the Vidyasagar School at Bowbazar.

ADHAR: "May I ask if Narendra would accept a job?"

MASTER: "Yes, he would. He has his mother, brothers, and sisters to support."

ADHAR: "Well, Narendra can support his family with fifty or with a hundred rupees. Will he try for a hundred?"

MASTER: "Worldly people think highly of their wealth. They feel that there is nothing like it. Sambhu said, 'It is my desire to leave all my property at the Lotus Feet of God.' But does God care for money? He wants from His devotees knowledge, devotion, discrimination, and renunciation.

"After the theft of the jewelry from the temple of Radhakanta, Mathur Babu said: 'O God, You could not protect Your own jewelry! What a shame!' Once he wanted to give me an estate and consulted Hriday about it, I overheard the whole thing from the Kali temple and said to him: 'Please don't harbour any such thought. It will injure me greatly.'"

ADHAR: "I can tell you truthfully, sir, that not more than six or seven persons like you have been born since the creation of the world."

MASTER: "How so? There certainly are people who have given up everything for God. As soon as a man gives up his wealth, people come to know about him. But it is also true that there are others unknown to people. Are there not such holy men in upper India?"

ADHAR: "I know of at least one such person in Calcutta. He is Devendranath Tagore."

MASTER: "What did you say? Who has enjoyed the world as much as he? Once I visited him at his house with Mathur Babu. I saw that he had many young children. The family physician was there writing out prescriptions. If, after having eight children, a man doesn't think of God, then who will?"

If, after enjoying so much wealth, Devendranath hadn't thought of God, then people would have cried shame upon him."

NIRANJAN : " But he paid off all his father's debts."

MASTER : " Keep quiet ! Don't torment me any more. Do you call anyone a man who doesn't pay off his father's debts if he is able to ? But I admit that Devendranath is infinitely greater than other worldly men, who are sunk in their worldliness. They can learn much from him.

" There is an ocean of difference between a real all-renouncing devotee of God and a householder devotee. A real sannyasi, a real devotee who has renounced the world, is like a bee. The bee will not light on anything but a flower. It will not drink anything but honey. But a devotee leading the worldly life is like a fly. The fly sits on a festering sore as well as on a sweet-meat. One moment he enjoys a spiritual mood, and the next moment he is beside himself with the pleasure of ' woman and gold '.

" A devotee who has really and truly renounced all for God is like the chatak bird. It will drink only the rain-water that falls when the star Svati is in the ascendant. It will rather die of thirst than touch any other water, though all around there may lie seven oceans and rivers full to the brim with water. An all-renouncing devotee will not touch ' woman and gold '. He will not keep ' woman and gold ' near him lest he should feel attached."

ADHAR : " But Chaitanya, too, enjoyed the world."

MASTER (*amazed*) : " What ? What did he enjoy in the world ? "

ADHAR : " Scholarship ! Honour ! "

MASTER : " It was honour in the sight of others, but nothing to him. Whether you—a deputy magistrate—or this youngster Niranjan honours me, it is all the same to me. And I tell you this truthfully : the idea of controlling a wealthy man never enters my mind. Surendra once said, rather condescendingly, that Rakhal's father could sue me for letting Rakhal<sup>6</sup> stay with me. When I heard this from Manomohan, I said : ' Who is this Surendra ? How does he dare make a remark like that ? He keeps a carpet and pillow here and gives me some money. Is that his excuse for daring to make such an impudent remark ? '"

ADHAR : " I understand that he gives ten rupees a month. Isn't that so ? "

MASTER : " That covers two months' expenses. The devotees stay here and he gives the money for their service. It is he who earns the merit. What is that to me ? Is it for my personal gain that I love Narendra, Rakhal, and the others ? "

M : " Your love for them is like a mother's for her children."

MASTER : " But even behind the mother's love lies her hope that the children will support her later on. But I love these youngsters because I see in them Narayana Himself. These are not mere words.

(*To Adhar*) " Listen. There is no scarcity of moths when the lamp is lighted. When God is realized, He Himself provides everything for His

<sup>6</sup> Rakhal was then a minor.

devotees. He sees that they do not lack anything. When God is enshrined in the heart, many people come forward to offer their services.

"Once a young sannyasi went to a householder to beg his food. He had lived as a monk from his very birth ; he knew nothing of worldly matters. A young daughter of the householder came out to give him alms. He turned to her mother and said, 'Mother, has this girl abscesses on her chest ?' The mother said : 'No, my child. God has given her breasts to nurse her child when she becomes a mother.' Thereupon the sannyasi said : 'Then why should I worry about myself ? Why should I beg my food ? He who has created me will certainly feed me.'

"Listen. If a woman renounces everything for her paramour, she can say to him, if need be, 'You wretch ! I shall sit on your chest and devour you.'

"Nangta told me of a certain king who gave a feast to the sadhus, using plates and tumblers of gold. I noticed in the monasteries at Benares with what great respect the abbots were treated. Many wealthy up-country people stood before them with folded hands, ready to obey their commands. But a true sadhu, a man who has really renounced everything, seeks neither a gold plate nor honour. God sees that he lacks nothing. God gives the devotee everything that is needed for realizing Him.

(To Adhar) "You are an executive officer. What shall I say to you ? Do whatever you think best. I am an illiterate person."

Adhar (*smiling, to the devotees*) : "Now he is examining me."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Dispassion alone is good. Don't you see, I didn't sign the receipt for my salary ? God alone is real and all else is illusory."

Hazra entered the room and sat with the devotees on the floor. Hazra repeated now and then, "Soham ! Soham !", "I am He ! I am He !" To Latu and other devotees he often said : "What does one gain by worshipping God with offerings ? That is merely giving Him things that are His already." He had said this once to Narendra.

The Master spoke to him.

MASTER : "I explained to Latu who the object of the devotee's worship is."

HAZRA : "The devotee really prays to his own Self."

MASTER : "What you say is a very lofty thought. The aim of spiritual discipline, of chanting God's name and glories, is to realize just that. A man attains everything when he discovers his true Self in himself. The object of sadhana is to realize that. That also is the purpose of assuming a human body. One needs the clay mould as long as the gold image has not been cast ; but when the image is made, the mould is thrown away. The body may be given up after the realization of God.

"God is not only inside us ; He is both inside and outside. The Divine Mother showed me in the Kali temple that everything is Chinmaya, the Embodiment of Spirit ; that it is She who has become all this—the image, myself, the utensils of worship, the door-sill, the marble floor. Everything is indeed Chinmaya.



"The aim of prayer, of spiritual discipline, of chanting the name and glories of God, is to realize just that. For that alone a devotee loves God. These youngsters<sup>6</sup> are on a lower level; they haven't yet reached a high spiritual state. They are following the path of bhakti. Please don't tell them such things as 'I am He'."

Like the mother bird brooding over her chicks, Sri Ramakrishna was alert to protect his devotees.

Adhar and Niranjan went out on the porch to take refreshments. Presently they returned to the room.

ADHAR (*smiling*): "We talked about so many things. (*Pointing to M.*) But he didn't utter a word."

MASTER: "In Keshab's organization there was a young man with four university degrees. He laughed when he saw people arguing with me. He said: 'To argue with him! How silly!' I saw him again, later on, at one of Keshab's meetings. But then he did not have the same bright complexion."

Sri Ramakrishna sat on the floor for his supper. It was a light meal of a little farina pudding and one or two luchis that had been offered in the Kali temple. M. and Latu were in the room. The devotees had brought various sweets for the Master. He touched a sandesh and asked Latu, "Who is the rascal that brought this?" He took it out of the cup and left it on the ground. He said to Latu and M.: "I know all about him. He is immoral."

LATU: "Shall I give you this sweet?"

MASTER: "Kishori brought it."

LATU: "Will it suit you?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Yes."

M. had received an English education. Sri Ramakrishna said to him: "It is not possible for me to eat things offered by anyone and everyone. Do you believe this?"

M: "Gradually I shall have to believe all these things."

MASTER: "Yes, that is so."

After finishing the meal Sri Ramakrishna washed his mouth. He said to M., "Then will you give the rupee to Naran?" "Yes," said M., "certainly I will."

The moon rose in the clear autumn sky and was reflected in the river. It was ebb-tide in the Ganges and the river flowed south toward the sea.

Sunday, September 14, 1884

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room with Narendra, Bhavanath, the Mukherji brothers, and other devotees. Rakhal was staying with Balaram at Vrindavan and was laid up with an attack of fever. Narendra was preparing himself for his coming law examination.

About eleven o'clock Jnan Babu arrived. He was a government official and had received four university degrees.

<sup>6</sup> Referring to Latu and the others.

MASTER (*at the sight of Jnan Babu*): "Well! Well! This sudden awakening of 'knowledge'!"

JNAN (*smiling*): "You must admit, sir, that one sees the awakening of knowledge as a result of very good fortune."

MASTER (*smiling*): "You are Jnan. Then why should you have ajnan, ignorance? Oh, I understand. Where there is knowledge there is also ignorance. The sage Vasishta was endowed with great knowledge and still he wept at the death of his sons. Therefore I ask you to go beyond both knowledge and ignorance. The thorn of ignorance has pierced the sole of a man's foot. He needs the thorn of knowledge to take it out. Afterwards he throws away both thorns. The jnani says, 'This world is a "frame-work of illusion".' But he who is beyond both knowledge and ignorance describes it as a 'mansion of mirth'. He sees that it is God Himself who has become the universe, all living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles."

"A man can live in the world after attaining God. Then he can lead the life of detachment. In the country I have seen the women of the carpenter families making flattened rice with a husking-machine. With one hand one of them turns the paddy in the hole and with the other she holds a nursing child. At the same time she talks with the buyer. She says to him: 'You owe me two annas. Pay it before you go.' But seventy-five per cent of the woman's mind is on her hand lest it should be crushed by the pestle of the husking-machine."

"A man should do his worldly duties with only twenty-five per cent of his mind, devoting the rest to God."

Referring to Pundit Shashadhar, the Master said to the devotees, "I found him monotonous—engaged in the dry discussion of philosophy."

"He alone who, after reaching the Nitya, the Absolute, can dwell in the Lila, the Relative, and again climb from the Lila to the Nitya, has ripe knowledge and devotion. Sages like Narada cherished love of God after attaining the Knowledge of Brahman. This is called vijnana."

"Mere dry knowledge is like an ordinary rocket: it bursts into a few sparks and then dies out. But the Knowledge of sages like Narada and Sukadeva is like a good rocket: for a while it showers balls of different colours, and then it stops; again it throws out new balls, and again it stops; and thus it goes on. Those sages had prema for God. Prema is the rope by which one can reach Satchidananda."

The Master finished his midday meal and rested a few minutes. Bhavanath, M., the Mukherji brothers, Hazra, and several other devotees sat down under the bakul-tree and began to converse. The Master stopped there awhile on his way to the pine-grove.

HAZRA (*to the younger Gopal*): "Please prepare a smoke for him [meaning the Master]."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Why don't you admit that you want it?" (*All laugh.*)

"Jnan" means "knowledge".



MUKHERJI (to Hazra) : "You must have learnt much wisdom from him [meaning the Master]."

MASTER (smiling) : "No, he has been wise like this from his boyhood." (All laugh.)

Presently Sri Ramakrishna returned from the pine-grove. The devotees noticed that he was in an ecstatic mood and was reeling like a drunkard. After reaching his room he regained the normal state.

Many devotees gathered in the room. Among them was a new-comer, a sadhaka from Konnagar, who looked over fifty years of age and seemed to have great vanity of scholarship.

The Master stood in the middle of the room and suddenly said to M., "He came here—Naran."

Narendra was engaged in a discussion with Hazra and a few others on the verandah. They could be heard from the room.

MASTER (referring to Narendra) : "The chatterbox ! But he is now much worried about his family."

M : "Yes, sir, it is true."

MASTER : "Once he said that he would look upon adversity as his good fortune. Isn't that so ?"

M : "He has great strength of mind."

A DEVOTEE : "Does he lack strength in anything ?"

Pointing to the sadhaka from Konnagar, a devotee said to the Master : "Sir, he has come to visit you. He has some questions to ask." The sadhaka was seated erect, his chin up.

SADHAKA : "Sir, what is the way ?"

MASTER : "Faith in the guru's words. One attains God by following the guru's instructions step by step. It is like reaching an object by following the trail of a thread."

SADHAKA : "Is it possible to see God ?"

MASTER : "He is unknowable by the mind engrossed in worldliness. One cannot attain God if one has even a trace of attachment to 'woman and gold'. But He is knowable by the pure mind and the pure intelligence—the mind and intelligence that have not the slightest trace of attachment. Pure Mind, Pure Intelligence, Pure Atman, are one and the same thing."

SADHAKA : "But the scriptures say, 'From Him words and mind return baffled.' He is unknowable by mind and words."

MASTER : "Oh, stop ! One cannot understand the meaning of the scriptures without practising spiritual discipline. What will you gain by merely uttering the word 'siddhi' ? The pundits glibly quote the scriptures ; but what will that accomplish ? A man does not become intoxicated even by rubbing siddhi on his body ; he must swallow it. What is the use of merely repeating, 'There is butter in the milk' ? Turn the milk into curd and churn it. Only then will you get butter."

SADHAKA : "You talk about churning butter. But you too are quoting the scriptures."

<sup>a</sup> Indian hemp.

MASTER : "What will one gain by merely quoting or hearing the scriptures ? One must assimilate them. The almanac makes a forecast of the rainfall for the year, but you won't get a drop by squeezing its pages."

SADHAKA : "You talk about churning butter. Have you done it yourself ?"

MASTER : "You don't have to bother about what I have or haven't done. Besides, it is very difficult to explain these things to others. Suppose someone asks you, 'What does ghee taste like ?' Your answer will be, 'Ghee tastes like ghee.'"

"To understand these things one needs to live with holy men, just as to understand the pulse of bile, of phlegm, and so on, one needs to live with a physician."

SADHAKA : "There are some people who are irritated by others' company."

MASTER : "That happens only after the attainment of Knowledge, after the realization of God. Shouldn't a beginner live in the company of holy men ?"

The sadhaka sat in silence a few moments. Then he said with some irritation : "Please tell me whether you have realized God either directly or intuitively. You may answer me if you are able, or you may keep silent if you wish." The Master said with a smile : "What shall I say ? One can only give a hint."

SADHAKA : "Then tell us that much."

Narendra was going to sing. He said, "No one has brought a pakhoaj."

THE YOUNGER GOPAL : "Mahimacharan has one."

MASTER (*interrupting*) : "No, we don't want anything of his here."

A devotee from Konnagar sang a song. Every now and then Sri Ramakrishna glanced at the sadhaka. The singer and Narendra became engaged in a furious discussion about musical technique. The sadhaka said to the singer, "What is the use of such discussions ?" Referring to another man who had joined in the discussion, Sri Ramakrishna said to the sadhaka, "Why didn't you scold him, too ?" It could be seen that the sadhaka was not on friendly terms with his companions from Konnagar.

Narendra sang :

O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain ?

Down the path of hope I gaze with longing, day and night. . . .

The sadhaka closed his eyes in meditation as he listened to the song. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. The rays of the setting sun fell on his body. Sri Ramakrishna quickly opened an umbrella and placed it near the door so that the sun might not disturb the sadhaka.

Narendra sang again :

How shall I call on Thee, O Lord, with such a stained and worldly mind ?

Can a straw remain unharmed, cast in a pit of flaming coals ?

<sup>9</sup> According to orthodox Hindu medicine, phlegm, bile, and wind are the three humours that control physical health. A physician can determine their condition by feeling the patient's pulse.



Thou, all goodness, art the fire, and I, all sin, am but a straw :  
How shall I ever worship Thee ?

The glory of Thy name, they say, redeems those even past re-  
deeming ;

Yet, when I chant Thy sacred name, alas ! my poor heart quakes  
with fright,

I spend my life a slave to sin ; how can I find a refuge, then,  
O Lord, within Thy holy way ?

In Thine abounding kindness, rescue Thou this sinful wretch ;  
Drag me off by the hair of my head and give me shelter at Thy feet.

Again he sang :

Sweet is Thy name, O Refuge of the humble !

It falls like sweetest nectar on our ears

And comforts us, Beloved of our souls !

The priceless treasure of Thy name alone

Is the abode of Immortality,

And he who chants Thy name becomes immortal.

Falling upon our ears, Thy holy name

Instantly slays the anguish of our hearts,

Thou Soul of our souls, and fills our hearts with bliss !

As Narendra sang the line, " And he who chants Thy name becomes immortal ", the Master went into samadhi. At first his fingers, especially the thumbs, began to tremble. The devotees from Konnagar had never seen the Master in samadhi. Seeing him silent, they were about to leave the room. Bhavanath said to them : " Why are you going away ? This is his samadhi." The devotees resumed their places.

Narendra sang :

I have laboured day and night

To make Thy seat within my heart ;

Wilt Thou not be kind to me,

O Lord of the World, and enter there ?

Sri Ramakrishna, still in the ecstatic mood, came down from his couch to the floor and sat by Narendra. The beloved disciple sang again :

In Wisdom's firmament the moon of Love is rising full,

And Love's flood-tide, in surging waves, is flowing everywhere.

O Lord, how full of bliss Thou art ! Victory unto Thee ! . . .

As Narendra sang the last line, Sri Ramakrishna stood up, still absorbed in samadhi.

After a long time the Master regained partial consciousness of the world and sat down on the mat. Narendra finished his singing, and the tanpura was put back in its place. The Master was still in a spiritual mood and said : " Mother, tell me what this is. They want someone to extract the butter for them and hold it to their mouths. They won't throw the spiced bait into the lake. They won't even hold the fishing-rod. Someone must catch the fish and put it into their hands ! How troublesome ! Mother, I won't listen to any more

argument. The rogues force it on me. What a bother ! I shall shake it off. God is beyond the Vedas and their injunctions. Can one realize Him by studying the scriptures, the Vedas, and the Vedanta ? (*To Narendra*) Do you understand this ? The Vedas give only a hint."

Narendra wanted the tanpura again. The Master said, "I want to sing." He was still in an ecstatic mood and sang :

Mother, this is the grief that sorely grieves my heart,  
That even with Thee for Mother, and though I am wide awake,  
There should be robbery in my house. . . .

The Master said, "Mother, why do You make me argue ?" He sang again :

Once for all, this time, I have thoroughly understood ;  
From One who knows it well, I have learnt the secret of bhava. . . .

The Master said, "I am quite conscious." But he was still groggy with divine fervour. He sang once more :

I drink no ordinary wine, but Wine of Everlasting Bliss,  
As I repeat my Mother Kali's name ;  
It so intoxicates my mind that people take me to be drunk ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna had said, "Mother, I won't listen to any more argument." Narendra sang :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !  
What need have I of knowledge or reason ? . . .

Sri Ramakrishna said with a smile : "O Mother, make me mad ! God cannot be realized through knowledge and reasoning, through the arguments in the scriptures." He had been pleased with the singing of the musician from Konnagar and said to him humbly : "Please sing about the Divine Mother. Please—one song."

MUSICIAN : "You must excuse me, sir."

MASTER (*bowing with folded hands*) : "No, sir. I can enforce this demand."

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna sang a few lines from a kirtan, assuming the attitude of a gopi :

Radha has every right to say it ;  
She has kept awake for Krishna.  
She has stayed awake all night,  
And she has every right to be piqued.

Then he said to the musician : "My dear sir, you are a child of the Divine Mother. She dwells in all beings. Therefore I have every right to enforce my demand. A farmer said to his guru, 'I shall get my mantra from you by beating you, if I have to.'"

MUSICIAN (*smiling*) : "By a shoe-beating ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "No ! I won't go that far."

Again in an abstracted mood Sri Ramakrishna said : "The beginner, the struggling, the perfect, and the supremely perfect. Which are you—perfect or supremely perfect ? Come along ! Sing for us."

The musician complied. He sang just a melody.

MASTER : " My dear sir, that too makes me happy."

The musician then sang a song. When the music was over, the devotees from Konnagar saluted the Master and took their leave. The sadhaka bowed before him with folded hands and said, " Holy man, let me say good-bye."

Sri Ramakrishna, still in an ecstatic mood, was talking to the Divine Mother.

MASTER : " Mother, is it You or I ? Do I do anything ? No, no ! It is You. Was it You who heard the arguments all this time, or was it I ? No, not I. It was You."

Sri Ramakrishna became conscious of the outer world and began to converse with Narendra, Bhavanath, and the other devotees. They were talking about the sadhaka.

BHAVANATH (*smiling*) : " What kind of man is he ? "

MASTER : " He is a tamasic devotee."

BHAVANATH : " He can certainly recite Sanskrit verses."

MASTER : " Once I said to a man about a sadhu : ' He is a rajasic sadhu. Why should one give him food and other presents ? ' At this another sadhu taught me a lesson by saying to me : ' Don't say that. There are three classes of holy men : sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic.' Since that day I have respected holy men of all classes."

NARENDRA (*smiling*) : " What ? Is it like the ' elephant God ' ? All, indeed, are God."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " It is God Himself who sports in the world as both vidya and avidya. Therefore I salute both. It is written in the *Chandi* : ' The Divine Mother is the good fortune of the blessed and the ill fortune of the unlucky.' (To Bhavanath) Is that mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana* ? "

BHAVANATH (*smiling*) : " I don't know, sir. The devotees from Konnagar did not understand your samadhi and were about to leave the room."

MASTER : " Who was it that asked them to remain ? "

BHAVANATH (*smiling*) : " It was I."

MASTER : " My child, you are equally good in bringing people here and in driving them away."

The conversation turned to the argument that Narendra had had with the musician from Konnagar.

MUKHERJI : " Narendra didn't spare him."

MASTER : " That's right. One needs such grit. This is called the influence of *tamas* on *sattva*. Must a man listen to everything another man says ? Should one say to a prostitute, ' All right, you may do whatever you like ' ? Must one listen to her ? At one time Radha was piqued. A friend said, ' Her ego has been roused.' Brinde, another friend, said : ' Whose is this ego ? Her ego belongs to Krishna alone. She is proud in the pride of Krishna.' "

The conversation turned to the glory of God's name.

BHAVANATH : " I feel such relief while chanting the name of Hari."

MASTER : "He who relieves us of sin is Hari. He relieves us of our three afflictions in the world. Chaitanya preached the glory of Hari's name ; so it must be good. You see, he was such a great scholar, and an Incarnation too. Since *he* preached that name, it must be good. (*Smiling*) Once some peasants were invited to a feast. They were asked if they would eat a preparation of hog plum. They answered : 'You may give it to us if the gentlemen have eaten it. If *they* enjoyed it, then it must be good.' (*All laugh.*)

(*To the Mukherji brothers*) "I should like to visit Shivanath. I won't have to hire a carriage if you take me in yours."

MUKHERJI : "All right, sir, we shall set a day."

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : "Do you think the Brahmos will like me ? They criticize those who believe in God with form."

Mahendra Mukherji wanted to go on a pilgrimage. He told Sri Ramakrishna so.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "How is that ? Do you want to go when the sprout of divine love has hardly come up ? First comes the sprout, then the tree, then the fruit. We are so happy to have you here to talk to."

MAHENDRA : "I feel like visiting the holy places a little. I shall return soon."

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna left his room. The devotees were walking in the garden. Many of them were about to leave.

The Master was conversing with Hazra on the north verandah. They were talking of Narendra's frequent visits to Annada, the eldest son of the Guhas.

HAZRA : "I hear that Annada is now practising austerity. He lives on very little food and eats rice once every four days."

MASTER : "Is that so ? 'Who knows ? One may realize God even by means of a religious garb.'"

HAZRA : "Narendra sang the agamani."<sup>10</sup>

MASTER (*eagerly*) : "How did he sing it ?"

Kishori stood close by. The Master said to him, "Are you well ?"

A little later the Master was standing on the west porch. Since it was autumn, he had put on a flannel shirt dyed with ochre. He asked Narendra, "Is it true that you "sang the agamani ?"

Accompanied by Narendra and M., Sri Ramakrishna walked to the embankment of the Ganges.

Narendra sang the agamani :

<sup>10</sup> A class of songs invoking Durga, the Divine Mother. According to Hindu mythology Durga, or Uma, is the daughter of King Himalaya. She was married, against the will of Her parents, to Siva, who roams in the cremation ground in the company of ghosts, smearing His body with ashes and living on alms. According to the terms of the marriage, Durga was allowed to stay with Her parents three days each year. The Hindu women of Bengal look on Durga as their own daughter. On the first day of the Durga Puja they sing the agamani to welcome the Divine Mother. The song is full of the tenderness and affection of a mother for her daughter who is returning home from her husband's house after a long time.

<sup>11</sup> As a member of the Brahmo Samaj, Narendra at that time did not believe in the gods and goddesses of the Hindu religion.



Tell me, my Uma, how have you fared, alone in the Stranger's<sup>12</sup> house ?

People speak so much ill of us ! Alas, I die of shame !  
My Son-in-law smears His body with ashes from the funeral pyre  
And roams about in great delight ;  
You too, along with Him, cover with ash your golden skin.  
He begs the food that He eats ! How can I bear it, being your mother ?

This time, when He returns to claim you, I shall say to Him,  
" My daughter Uma is not at home."

Sri Ramakrishna stood listening to the song and went into samadhi. The sun was still above the horizon as the Master stood on the embankment in the ecstatic mood. On one side of him was the Ganges, flowing north with the flood-tide. Behind him was the flower garden. To his right one could see the nahabat and the Panchavati. Narendra stood by his side and sang. Gradually the darkness of evening fell upon the earth.

After Narendra and several other devotees had saluted the Master and left for Calcutta, Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room. He was absorbed in meditation on the Divine Mother and was chanting Her holy name.

Jadu Mallick had arrived at his garden house next to the Kali temple. He sent for the Master. Adhar, too, had arrived from Calcutta, and he saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The Master asked Latu to light the lantern and accompany him to Jadu's garden.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " Why didn't you bring Naran with you ? "

M : " Shall I come with you ? "

MASTER : " Do you want to come ? Adhar and the others are here. All right, you may come. Will the Mukherjis also come with us ? (*To the Mukherjis*) Come along. Then we can leave Jadu Mallick quickly."

The Master went to Jadu's drawing-room. It was a well furnished room, with everything spick and span. The lamps were lighted. Jadu was sitting with his friends and was playing with the children. Servants were in attendance. Smiling, Jadu welcomed Sri Ramakrishna, but he did not get up. He treated the Master as a friend of long acquaintance.

Jadu was a devotee of Gauranga. He had just seen a performance of Gauranga's life at the Star Theatre and told the Master about it. The Master listened to his account joyfully and played with the children. M. and the Mukherji brothers sat near him. In the course of the conversation Sri Ramakrishna told Jadu that Adhar had not been able to secure the post of vice-chairman of the Calcutta Municipality. Jadu said that Adhar was still young and could try for it again. At his request the Master sang a few songs about Gauranga.

After the music was over, the Mukherjis were about to take their leave. The Master, too, was ready to go, but he was in an ecstatic mood. On coming to the porch he went into samadhi. The gate-keeper of the garden house was a pious man. Now and then he invited the Master to his house and fed him. Sri Ramakrishna stood there in samadhi, and the gate-keeper fanned him

<sup>12</sup> Siva, Uma's Husband.

with a large fan. Ratan, the manager of the garden house, saluted the Master, and Sri Ramakrishna, returning to the consciousness of the relative world, greeted the manager and the gate-keeper, saying, "Narayana". Then, accompanied by the devotees, he went back to the temple garden through the main gate.

MASTER (*to the Mukherjis, pointing to M.*) : "Please visit him often."

MUKHERJI (*smiling*) : "Yes, henceforth he will be our teacher."

MASTER : "It is the nature of the hemp-smoker to make merry in the company of another hemp-smoker. He will not talk even to an amir, but he will embrace a wretched hemp-smoker if he happens to meet one." (*All laugh.*)

It was about nine o'clock. The Mukherji brothers saluted the Master and went away. Adhar and M. sat on the floor in the Master's room while he talked to Adhar about Rakhal.

Rakhal was staying in Vrindavan with Balaram. The Master had learnt from a letter about Rakhal's illness. He was so worried about him that two or three days earlier he had wept before Hazra like a child. Adhar had sent a registered letter to Rakhal but had received no reply.

MASTER (*to Adhar*) : "Naran has received a letter from Vrindavan. Why haven't you received a reply to yours?"

ADHAR : "I haven't yet heard from Vrindavan."

MASTER : "M. has also received a letter from Vrindavan."

They began to talk of Sri Ramakrishna's seeing a play, at the Star Theatre, about the life of Gauranga.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Jadu told me that one could see the play very well from a one-rupee seat." Very cheap! Once we were talking about going to Panihati. Jadu wanted me to go in a country boat with a whole crowd of passengers. (*All laugh.*)

"Formerly he liked to hear a little about God. But I don't see Jadu much nowadays. He is always surrounded by flatterers. They have spoiled him. He is a man of a very calculating nature. I would no sooner set foot in his house than he would ask me, 'How much is the carriage hire?' " I would say : 'You don't have to bother about it. You may give two and a half rupees.' That would keep him quiet." (*All laugh.*)

It was late. Adhar was about to depart. The Master asked M. to bring Naran with him.

<sup>13</sup> In spite of his great wealth, Jadu Mallick was very miserly.

<sup>14</sup> It is customary for a householder in India to pay the carriage hire of a holy man when the latter visits his house.

## XXVIII

### AT THE STAR THEATRE (I)

*Friday, September 19, 1884*

**I**T WAS MAHALAYA, a sacred day of the Hindus, and the day of the new moon. At two o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room with Mahendra Mukherji, Priya Mukherji, M., Baburam, Harish, Kishori, and Latu. Some were sitting on the floor, some standing, and others moving about. Hazra was sitting on the porch. Rakhal was still at Vrindavan with Balaram.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " I was at Captain's house in Calcutta. It was very late when I returned. What a sweet nature Captain has ! What devotion ! He performs the arati before the image. First he waves a lamp with three lights, then a lamp with one light, and last of all he waves burning camphor. When performing the worship he does not speak. Once he motioned to me to take my seat. During the worship his eyes become swollen from spiritual emotion. They look as if they have been stung by wasps. He cannot sing, but he chants hymns beautifully. In his mother's presence he sits on a lower level ; she sits on a high stool.

" His father was a havildar in the English army. He would hold a gun with one hand and with the other worship Siva. His servant made a clay image of Siva for him. He wouldn't even touch water before performing the worship. He earned six thousand rupees a year. •

" Captain sends his mother to Benares now and then. Twelve or thirteen servants attend her there ; it is very expensive. Captain knows the Vedanta, the *Gita*, and the *Bhagavata* by heart. He says that the educated gentlemen of Calcutta follow the ways of the mlechchhas.

" In his earlier years he practised hathayoga. That is why he strokes my head gently when I am in samadhi. His wife worships the Deity in another form—that of Gopala. This time I didn't find her so miserly. She too knows the *Gita* and other scriptures. What devotion they have !

" They cooked a goat curry. Captain said they could eat it for fifteen days, but she said, ' No, no ! Only seven days.' But I liked the taste of it. They serve a very small quantity of each dish, but nowadays they give me good portions since I eat more than they do. After the meal either Captain or his wife fans me.

"They are very pious souls and show great respect to holy men. The people of upper India are greatly devoted to sadhus. The sons and nephews of the Jung Bahadur of Nepal once visited the temple garden ; before me they showed great respect and humility. Once a young girl of Nepal came to see me with Captain. She was a great devotee, and unmarried ; she knew the whole of the *Gita Govinda* by heart. Dwarika Babu<sup>1</sup> and the others wanted to hear her music. When she sang the *Gita Govinda*, Dwarika Babu was profoundly moved and wiped the tears from his eyes with his handkerchief. She was asked why she was not married. She said : 'I am the handmaid of God. Whom else shall I serve ?' Her people respect her as a goddess, as the scriptures enjoin.

(*To Mahendra Mukherji and the others*) "I shall feel very happy ■ know that you are being benefited by your visits here. (*To M.*) Why do people come hear ? I don't know much of reading and writing."

M : "God's power is in you. That is why there is such power of attraction. It is the Divine Spirit that attracts."

MASTER : "Yes, this is the attraction of Yogamaya, the Divine Sakti. She casts the spell. God performs all His lila through the help of Yogamaya.

"The love of the gopis was like the attachment of a woman to her paramour. They were intoxicated with ecstatic love for Sri Krishna. A woman cherishing illicit love is not very keen about her own husband. If she is told that her husband has come, she will say : 'What if he has ? There is food in the kitchen. He can help himself.' But if she is told of the arrival of a stranger—jovial, handsome, and witty—she will run to see him and peep at him from behind a screen.

"You may raise an objection and say : 'We have not seen God. How can we feel attracted to Him as the gopis felt attracted to Krishna ?' But it is possible. 'I do not know Him. I have only heard His name, and that has fixed my mind upon Him.'"

A DEVOTEE : "Sir, what is the significance of Sri Krishna's stealing the gopis' clothes ?"

MASTER : "There are eight fetters that bind a person to the world. The gopis were free from all but one : shame. Therefore Krishna freed them from that one, too, by taking away their clothes. On attaining God one gets rid of all fetters. (*To Mahendra Mukherji and the others*) By no means all people feel attracted to God. There are special souls who feel so. To love God one must be born with good tendencies. Otherwise, why should you alone of all the people of Baghbazar come here ? You can't expect anything good in a dunghill. The touch of the Malaya breeze turns all trees into sandal-wood, no doubt. But there are a few exceptions—the banyan, the cotton-tree, and the aswattha, for example.

(*To the Mukherji brothers*) "You are well off. If a man slips from the path of yoga, then he is reborn in a prosperous family and starts again his spiritual practice for the realization of God."

MAHENDRA : "Why does one slip from the path of yoga ?"

<sup>1</sup> A son of Mathur Babu.



MASTER : " While thinking of God the aspirant may feel a craving for material enjoyment. It is this craving that makes him slip from the path. In his next life he will be born with the spiritual tendencies that he failed to translate into action in his present life."

MAHENDRA : " Then what is the way ?"

MASTER : " No salvation is possible for a man as long as he has desire, as long as he hankers for worldly things. Therefore fulfil all your desires regarding food, clothes, and sex. (*Smiling*) What do you say about the last one ? Legitimate or illegitimate ? (*M. and Mahendra laugh.*)

" It is not good to cherish desires and hankerings. For that reason I used to fulfil whatever desires came to my mind. Once I saw some coloured sweetmeats at Burrabazar and wanted to eat them. They brought me the sweets and I ate a great many. The result was that I fell ill.

" In my boyhood days, while bathing in the Ganges, I saw a boy with a gold ornament around his waist. During my state of divine intoxication I felt a desire to have a similar ornament myself. I was given one, but I couldn't keep it on very long. When I put it on, I felt within my body the painful uprush of a current of air. It was because I had touched gold to my skin. I wore the ornament a few moments and then had to put it aside. Otherwise I should have had to tear it off.

" I once felt a desire to eat the famous sweetmeats of different cities. (*All laugh.*) I had a desire to hear Sambhu's musical recital of the *Chandi*. After fulfilling that desire I wanted to hear the same thing by Rajnarayan. That desire also was satisfied.

" At the time many holy men used to visit the temple garden. A desire arose in my mind that there should be a separate store-room to supply them with their provisions. Mathur Babu arranged for one. The sadhus were given food-stuffs, fuel, and the like from that store-room.

" Once the idea came to me to put on a very expensive robe embroidered with gold and to smoke a silver hubble-bubble. Mathur Babu sent me the new robe and the hubble-bubble. I put on the robe. I also smoked the hubble-bubble in various fashions. Sometimes I smoked ■ reclining this way, and sometimes that way, sometimes with head up, and sometimes with head down. Then I said to myself, ' O mind, this is what they call smoking a silver hubble-bubble.' Immediately I renounced it. I kept the robe on my body a few minutes longer and then took it off. I began to trample it underfoot and spit on it, saying : ' So this is an expensive robe ! But it only increases man's rajas.' "

Rakhal had been staying at Vrindavan with Balaram. At first he had written excited letters praising the holy place. He had written to M. : " It is the best of all places. Please come here. The peacocks dance around, and one always hears and sees religious music and dancing. There is an unending flow of divine bliss." But then Rakhal had been laid up with an attack of fever. Sri Ramakrishna was very much worried about him and vowed to worship the Divine Mother for his recovery. So he began to talk about Rakhal.

MASTER : " Rakhal had his first religious ecstasy while sitting here massaging my feet. A *Bhagavata* scholar had been expounding the sacred book

in the room. As Rakhal listened to his words, he shuddered every now and then. Then he became altogether still.

"His second ecstasy was at Balaram Bose's house. In that state he could not keep himself sitting upright; he lay flat on the floor. Rakhal belongs to the realm of the Personal God. He leaves the place if one talks about the Impersonal.

"I have taken a vow to worship the Divine Mother when he recovers. You see, he has renounced his home and relatives and completely surrendered himself to me. It was I who sent him to his wife now and then. He still had a little desire for enjoyment.

(*Pointing to M.*) "Rakhal has written him from Vrindavan that it is a grand place—the peacocks dance around. Now let the peacocks take care of him. He has really put me in a fix.

"Rakhal has been staying with Balaram at Vrindavan. Ah, what a nice nature Balaram has! It is only for my sake that he doesn't go to Orissa, where his family owns an estate. His brother stopped his monthly allowance and wrote to him: 'Come and stay with us here. Why should you waste so much money in Calcutta?' But he didn't listen. He has been living in Calcutta because he wants to see me. What devotion to God! He is busy day and night with his worship. His gardener is always making garlands of flowers for the Deity. He has decided to spend four months a year at Vrindavan to reduce his expenses. He gets a monthly allowance of two hundred rupees.

"Why am I so fond of the youngsters? They are still untouched by 'woman and gold'. I find that they belong to the class of the *nityasiddhas*, the ever perfect.

"When Narendra first came here he was dressed in dirty clothes; but his eyes and face betokened some inner stuff. At that time he did not know many songs. He sang one or two: 'Let us go back once more, O mind, to our own abode!' and 'O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain?'

"Whenever he came here, I would talk only with him, though the room was filled with people. He would say to me, 'Please talk to them', and then I would talk with the others.

"I became mad for the sight of him and wept for him in Jadu Mallick's garden house. I wept here, too, holding Bholanath's hand. Bholanath said, 'Sir, you shouldn't behave that way for a mere *kayastha* boy.' One day the 'fat brahmin' said to me about Narendra, with folded hands, 'Sir, he has very little education; why should you be so restless for him?'

"Bhavanath and Narendra are a pair. They are like man and woman. So I asked Bhavanath to rent a house near Narendra's. Both of them belong to the realm of the formless Reality.

"I forbid the youngsters to spend a long time with women or visit them too frequently. Haripada has fallen into the clutches of a woman of the Ghoshpara sect. She shows maternal feeling for him; but Haripada is a child and doesn't understand its real meaning. The women of that sect act that way

\* A nickname for Prankrishna, a devotee of the Master.

when they see young boys. I understand that Haripada lies on her lap and that she feeds him with her own hands. I shall tell him that this is not good. This very maternal feeling leads to a downfall. The women of that sect practise spiritual discipline in the company of men ; they regard men as Krishna. A teacher of that sect asks a woman devotee, 'Have you found your Krishna ?' and she says, 'Yes, I have found my Krishna.'

"The other day that woman came here. I watched the way she looked around and I didn't approve of it. I said to her, 'You may treat Haripada any way you like, but don't have any wrong feeling for him.'

"The youngsters are now in the stage of sadhana. They are aspirants. For them the only thing now is renunciation. A sannyasi must not look even at the portrait of a woman. I say to them : 'Don't sit beside a woman and talk to her, even if she is a devotee. You may say a word or two to her, standing.' Even a perfect soul must follow this precept for his own protection and also to set an example to others. When women come to me, I too say to them after a few minutes, 'Go and visit the temples.' If they don't get up, I myself leave the room. Others will learn from my example.

"Can you tell me why all these youngsters, and you people, too, visit me ? There must be something in me ; or why should you all feel such a pull, such attraction ?

"Once I visited Hriday's house at Sihore. From there I was taken to Syambazar. I had a vision of Gauranga before I entered the village, and I realized that I should meet Gauranga's devotees there. For seven days and nights I was surrounded by a huge crowd of people. Such attraction ! Nothing but kirtan and dancing day and night. People stood in rows on the walls and even were in the trees.

"I stayed at Natavar Goswami's house. It was crowded day and night. In the morning I would run away to the house of a weaver for a little rest. There too I found that people would gather after a few minutes. They carried drums and cymbals with them, and the drum constantly played : 'Takuti ! Takuti !' We would have our meal at three in the afternoon.

"The rumour spread everywhere that a man had arrived who died<sup>1</sup> seven times and came back to life again. Hriday would drag me away from the crowd to a paddy-field for fear I might have an attack of heat apoplexy. The crowd would follow us there like a line of ants. Again the cymbals and the never-ending 'Takuti ! Takuti !' of the drums. Hriday scolded them and said : 'Why do you bother us like this ? Have we never heard kirtan ?'

"The Vaishnava priests of the village came and almost started a quarrel. They thought I would take their share of the fees from the devotees. But soon they discovered that I didn't touch a piece of cloth or even a thread. Someone remarked that I was a Brahmajñani. So the Vaishnava pundits wanted to test me. One said, 'Why hasn't he beads, and a mark on his forehead ?' Another of them replied, 'They have dropped from him, as the dry branch from a coconut tree.' It was there that I learnt this illustration of the

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the Master's samadhi.

dry branch of a coconut tree. The upadhis, limitations, drop when one attains Knowledge.

"People came thronging from distant villages. They even spent the night there. At Syambazar I learnt the meaning of divine attraction. When God incarnates Himself on earth He attracts people through the help of Yogamaya, His Divine Power. People become spellbound."

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. The Master had been conversing with the Mukherji brothers and the other devotees, when Radhika Goswami, a Vaishnava scholar, arrived and bowed before him. This was his first visit to the Master. Radhika Goswami took a seat.

MASTER : "Are you a descendant of Advaita?"<sup>4</sup>

GOSWAMI : "Yes, sir."

At this the Master saluted him with folded hands.

MASTER : "You are descended from Advaita Goswami. You must have inherited some of his traits. A sweet-mango tree produces only sweet mangoes and not sour ones. Of course, it happens that some trees produce large mangoes and some small ; that depends on the soil. Isn't that true?"

GOSWAMI (*humbly*) : "Sir, what do I know?"

MASTER : "Whatever you may say, others will not let you off so easily. Brahmins, however imperfect they may be, are worshipped by all on account of their having been born in the lines of great sages. (*To M.*) Tell us the story of the samkhachila."<sup>5</sup>

M. sat in silence.

MASTER : "If one of your ancestors was a great soul, he will certainly pull you up, however unworthy you may be. When King Duryodhana and his brothers were taken captive by the gandharvas, Yudhishthira released them in spite of the fact that King Duryodhana was his enemy and had banished him to the forest.

"Besides, one must show respect to the religious garb. Even the mere garb recalls to mind the real object. Chaitanya once dressed an ass in a religious garb and then prostrated himself before it.

"Why do people bow before a samkhachila? When Kamsa was about to kill the Divine Mother, She flew away taking the form of a samkhachila.<sup>6</sup> So even now people salute the bird.

<sup>4</sup> An intimate companion of Sri Chaitanya.

<sup>5</sup> A bird similar to the kite.

<sup>6</sup> The following story is recorded in connexion with the birth of Sri Krishna : Kamsa, the king of Mathura, was the very personification of evil. His god-fearing sister Devaki was married to Vasudeva. When Kamsa came to know that a son of Devaki would be his slayer, and that his sister was already expecting a child, he was about to kill her. But he spared her life on her promise to deliver her child to him as soon as it was born. Both Vasudeva and Devaki were kept in prison under a strong guard. In the prison seven sons were born to Devaki, one after another, and they were all slain by the evil Kamsa. The eighth child was Sri Krishna. Immediately after His birth, Vasudeva, through divine help, took Him across the Jamuna river to the village of Gokula, where Nanda and his wife Yasoda lived. To them had just been born a daughter, who was an Incarnation of the Divine Power. Sri Krishna was exchanged for the girl, who was then delivered to Kamsa as the new-born child of Devaki. Kamsa was about to kill her when she flew into the sky in the form of a bird, the samkhachila, remarking that Kamsa's slayer was growing up at Gokula. This is why the samkhachila is held in respect. Eventually Sri Krishna killed Kamsa.



"An Englishman arrived at the cantonment of Chanak. The sepoy saluted him. Koar Singh explained to me : 'India is under the rule of the English. Therefore one should salute an Englishman.'

"The Saktas follow the Tantra, and the Vaishnavas the Purana. There is no harm for the Vaishnavas in speaking publicly of their spiritual practices. But the Saktas maintain secrecy about theirs. For this reason it is difficult to understand a Sakta.

(To Goswami) "You are all good people. How much japa you practise ! How much you chant the name of Hari !"

GOSWAMI (*humbly*) : "Oh, no ! We do very little. I am a great sinner."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "You have humility. That is good. But there is also another way : 'I chant the name of Hari. How can I be a sinner ?' He who constantly repeats : 'I am a sinner ! I am a wretch !' verily becomes a sinner. What lack of faith ! A man chants the name of God so much, and still he talks of sin !"

Radhika Goswami listened to these words in amazement.

MASTER : "At Vrindavan I myself put on the garb of the Vaishnavas and wore it for fifteen days. (*To the devotees*) I have practised the disciplines of all the paths, each for a few days. Otherwise I should have found no peace of mind. (*Smiling*) I have practised all the disciplines ; I accept all paths. I respect the Saktas, the Vaishnavas, and also the Vedantists. Therefore people of all sects come here. And every one of them thinks that I belong to his school. I also respect the modern Brahmajnanis.<sup>7</sup>

"A man had a tub of dye. Such was its wonderful property that people could dye their clothes any colour they wanted by merely dipping them in it. A clever man said to the owner of the tub, 'Dye my cloth the colour of your dye-stuff.' (*All laugh.*)

"Why should I be one-sided ? The idea that the people of a particular sect will not come to me does not frighten me. I don't care a bit whether people come to me or not. The thought of keeping anyone under my control never crosses my mind. Adhar Sen asked me to ask the Divine Mother for a big position for him, but he didn't get it. If that makes him think differently about me, what do I care ?

"Once at Keshab's house I found myself in a new mood. The Brahmos always speak of the Impersonal ; therefore I said to the Divine Mother in an ecstatic mood : 'Mother, please don't come here. They don't believe in Your forms.'"

Radhika Goswami listened to these words of the Master against sectarianism and remained silent.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Vijay<sup>8</sup> is in a wonderful state of mind nowadays. He falls to the ground while chanting the name of Hari. He devotes himself to kirtan, meditation, and other spiritual practices till four in the morning. He now puts on an ochre robe and prostrates himself before the images of

<sup>7</sup> The members of the Brahmo Samaj.

<sup>8</sup> Vijaykrishna Goswami. Though born in a Vaishnava family, he became a member of the Brahmo Samaj. Later he returned to the worship of the Personal God.

God. Once he accompanied me to Gadadhar's' schoolhouse. I pointed out the place where Gadadhar used to meditate. At once Vijay prostrated himself there. Again he fell prostrate before the picture of Chaitanyadeva."

GOSWAMI : "What about the image of Radha-Krishna ?"

MASTER : "He prostrated himself there too. Vijay also follows all the conventions of religious life."

GOSWAMI : "He can now be accepted in Vaishnava society."

MASTER : "People's opinions don't count for much with him."

GOSWAMI : "I don't mean that. By accepting him Vaishnava society will honour itself."

MASTER : "He respects me very much. But it is difficult to reach him. One day he is called to Dacca, the next day to some other place. He is always busy. His presence has created great trouble in the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj."<sup>10</sup>

GOSWAMI : "Why so, sir ?"

MASTER : "The Brahmos tell him : 'You mix with people who worship God with form. You are an idolater.' Vijay is liberal and straightforward. Unless a man is guileless, he doesn't receive the grace of God."

Sri Ramakrishna talked to the Mukherji brothers. Mahendra, the elder, had his own business. Priyanath, the younger, had been an engineer. After making some provision for himself, he had given up his job. Mahendra was thirty-five or thirty-six years old. The brothers had homes both in the country and in Calcutta.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Don't sit idle simply because your spiritual consciousness has been awakened a little. Go forward. Beyond the forest of sandalwood there are other and more valuable things—silver-mines, gold-mines, and so on."

PRIYA (*smiling*) : "Sir, our legs are in chains. We cannot go forward."

MASTER : "What if the legs are chained ? The important thing is the mind. Bondage is of the mind, and freedom also is of the mind."

"Listen to a story. There were two friends. One went into a house of prostitution and the other to hear a recital of the *Bhagavata*. 'What a shame !' thought the first. 'My friend is hearing spiritual discourse, but just see what I have slipped down to !' The second friend said to himself : 'Shame on me ! My friend is having a good time, but how stupid I am !' After death the soul of the first was taken to Vaikuntha by the messenger of Vishnu, while that of the second was taken to the nether world of Yama."

PRIYA : "But the mind is not under my control."

MASTER : "How is that ? There is such a thing as abhyasayoga, yoga through practice. Keep up the practice and you will find that your mind will follow in whatever direction you lead it. The mind is like a white cloth just returned from the laundry. It will be red if you dip it in red dye and blue if you dip in blue. It will have whatever colour you dip it in."

<sup>9</sup> A celebrated Vaishnava saint.

<sup>10</sup> Vijay and several of his friends, on account of a disagreement with Keshab, seceded from Keshab's organization and founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

(To Goswami) "Have you anything to ask?"

GOSWAMI: "No, sir. I am satisfied that I have seen you and have been listening to your words."

MASTER: "Go and visit the temples."

GOSWAMI (*very humbly*): "Won't you please sing something about Sri Chaitanya?"

The Master complied. He sang:

Why has My body turned so golden? It is not time for this to be:  
Many the ages that must pass, before as Gauranga I appear! . . .

Again:

Gora gazes at Vrindavan and tears stream from his eyes;  
In an exuberance of joy, he laughs and weeps and dances  
and sings.  
He takes a wood for Vrindavan, the ocean for the blue Jamuna;  
He rolls on the ground for love of Hari.

After singing, the Master went on with the conversation.

MASTER (to Goswami): "I have sung these songs to suit your Vaishnava temperament. But I must sing differently when the Saktas or others come.

"Here" people of all sects come—Vaishnavas, Saktas, Kartabhajas, Vedantists, and also members of the modern Brahmo Samaj. Therefore one finds here all ideals and attitudes. It is by the will of God that different religions and opinions have come into existence. God gives to different people what they can digest. The mother does not give fish pilau to all her children. All cannot digest it; so she prepares simple fish soup for some. Everyone cherishes his own special ideal and follows his own nature.

"They provide various images for the Baroari" because people of different sects assemble at it. You see there images of Radha-Krishna, Siva-Durga, and Sita-Rama—different images in different places. A crowd gathers before each image. The Vaishnavas spend most of their time before the image of Radha-Krishna, the Saktas before Siva-Durga, and the devotees of Rama before Sita-Rama.

"But it is quite different with those who are not spiritually minded at all. In the Baroari one sees another image also—a prostitute beating her paramour with a broomstick. Those people stand there with gaping mouths and cry to their friends: 'What are you looking at over there? Come here! Look at this!'" (*All laugh.*)

Radhika Goswami saluted the Master and took his leave.

It was about five o'clock. The Master was on the semicircular west porch. Baburam, Latu, the Mukherji brothers, M., and some other devotees were with him.

MASTER (to M. and the others): "Why should I be one-sided? The goswamis belong to the Vaishnava school and are very bigoted. They think that their opinion alone is right and all other opinions are wrong. My words

<sup>11</sup> Referring to himself.

<sup>12</sup> A religious festival, the cost of which is borne by the whole community.

have hit him hard. (*Smiling*) One must strike the elephant on the head with the goad ; that is the elephant's most sensitive spot."

Then Sri Ramakrishna told a few naughty jokes for the young men.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "I don't give the youngsters a pure vegetarian diet : now and then I give them a little water smelling of fish. Otherwise, why should they come ?"

The Mukherji brothers left the porch. They went to the garden for a stroll.

MASTER (*to M.*): "I wonder whether the Mukherjis have taken offence at my jokes ?"

M : "Why should they ? Captain said that you are like a child. After realizing God a man becomes childlike."

MASTER : "Yes, and sometimes he behaves like a boy, and sometimes like a young man. As a boy he is very light-hearted. He may use frivolous language. As a young man he is like a roaring lion while teaching others. You had better explain my state of mind to the Mukherjis."

M : "I don't have to do that. Haven't they the sense to see it ?"

Again the Master became light-hearted with the boys. Then he said to one of the devotees : "Today is the new moon. Go to the Kali temple in the evening."<sup>13</sup>

It was dusk. They heard the sound of gongs, cymbals, and other instruments used in the evening service in the temples. The Master said to Baburam, "Come with me to the Kali temple." He and Baburam went toward the temple, accompanied by M. At the sight of Harish sitting on the porch, the Master said : "What is this ? Is he in ecstasy ?"

Going through the courtyard, the Master and the devotees stopped a minute in front of the Radhakanta temple to watch the worship. Then they proceeded to the shrine of Kali. With folded hands the Master prayed to the Divine Mother : "O Mother ! O Divine Mother ! O Brahmayi !"

Reaching the raised platform in front of the shrine, he bowed low before the image. The arati was going on. He entered the shrine and fanned the image.

The evening worship was over. The devotees bowed before the Deity. It was the night of the new moon. The Master was in a spiritual mood. Gradually his mood deepened into intense ecstasy. He returned to his room, reeling like a drunkard and holding to Baburam's hand.

A lamp was lighted on the west porch. The Master sat there a few minutes, chanting : "Hari Om ! Hari Om ! Hari Om !" and other mystic syllables of the Tantra. Presently he returned to his room and sat on the small couch, facing the east. He was still completely absorbed in divine fervour. He said to the Divine Mother : "Mother, that I should first speak and You then act—oh, that's nonsense ! What is the meaning of talk ? It is nothing but a sign. One man says, 'I shall eat.' Again, another says, 'No ! I won't hear of it.' Well, Mother, suppose I had said I would not eat ; wouldn't I still feel hungry ? Is it ever possible that You should listen only when one prays aloud

<sup>13</sup> The night of the new moon is especially auspicious for the worship of the Divine Mother.



and not when one feels an inner longing ? You are what You are. Then why do I speak ? Why do I pray ? I do as You make me do. Oh, what confusion ! Why do You make me reason ?”

As Sri Ramakrishna was thus talking to God, the devotees listened wonderstruck to his words. The Master's eyes fell upon them.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): “One must inherit good tendencies to realize God. One must have done something, some form of tapasya, either in this life or in another.

“When Draupadi's” clothes were being taken off, she cried earnestly, praying to God. God revealed Himself to her and said : ‘Try to remember whether you have ever made a gift of a cloth to anyone. Then your modesty will be preserved.’ Draupadi replied : ‘Yes, I remember now. Once a rishi was taking his bath when his loin-cloth was carried away by the current. I tore off half my cloth and gave it to him.’ Thereupon the Lord said, ‘Then you have nothing to fear.’”

M. was sitting on the small foot-rug.

MASTER (*to M.*): “You have understood what I said.”

M : “Yes, sir. You spoke about inherent tendencies.”

MASTER : “Repeat what I said.”

M. repeated the story of Draupadi.

Hazra entered the room. He had been living with Sri Ramakrishna in the temple garden for the past two years and had first met the Master in 1880 at Sihore in the house of Hriday, the Master's nephew. Hazra's native village was near Sihore, and he owned some property there. He had a wife and children and also some debts. From youth he had felt a spirit of renunciation and sought the company of holy men and devotees. The Master had asked him to live with him at Dakshineswar. He also looked after his necessities. Hazra's mind was a jumble of undigested religious moods. He professed the path of knowledge and disapproved of Sri Ramakrishna's attitude of bhakti and his longing for the young devotees. Now and then he thought of the Master as a great soul, but again he slighted him as an ordinary human being. He spent much of his time in telling his beads, and he criticized Rakhal and the other young men for their indifference to the practice. He was a strong advocate of religious conventions and rules of conduct, and made a fad of them. He was about thirty-eight years old.

As Hazra came in, the Master became a little abstracted and in that mood began to talk.

MASTER (*to Hazra*): “What you are doing is right in principle, but the application is not quite correct. Don't find fault with anyone, not even with an insect. As you pray to God for devotion, so also pray that you may not find fault with anyone.”

HAZRA : “Does God listen to our prayer for bhakti ?”

MASTER : “Surely. I can assure you of that a hundred times. But the prayer must be genuine and earnest. Do worldly-minded people weep for God

<sup>14</sup> The wife of the five Pandava brothers. In order to humiliate her in the court, Duryodhana ordered her clothes to be taken off.

as they do for wife and children ? At Kamarpukur the wife of a certain man fell ill. The man thought she would not recover ; he began to tremble and was about to faint. Who feels that way for God ? "

Hazra was about to take the dust of the Master's feet.

MASTER (*shrinking*) : " What is this ? "

HAZRA : " Why should I not take the dust of his feet who has so kindly kept me with him ? "

MASTER : " Satisfy God and everyone will be satisfied. ' If He is pleased the world is pleased.' Once the Lord ate a few greens from Draupadi's cooking-pot and said, ' Ah, I am satisfied.' Immediately the whole world and all its living beings were satisfied ; they felt as if they had eaten their fill. But was the world satisfied or did it feel that way when the rishis ate their food ?

(*To Hazra*) " A perfect soul, even after attaining Knowledge, practises devotions or observes religious ceremonies to set an example to others. I go to the Kali temple and I bow before the holy pictures in my room ; therefore others do the same. Further, if a man has become habituated to such ceremonies, he feels restless if he does not observe them.

" One day I saw a sannyasi under the banyan-tree. He had put the salagram on the same carpet with his guru's sandals. He was worshipping them. I said to him, ' If you have attained Knowledge to that extent,<sup>15</sup> then why such formal worship at all ? ' He replied : ' What difference does it make ? Since I do everything else, why not this too ? Sometimes I offer the flowers at the guru's feet and sometimes to God.'

" One cannot renounce work as long as one has a body. As long as there is mud at the bottom of the lake, bubbles will be produced.

(*To Hazra*) " If there is knowledge of one, there is also knowledge of many. What will you achieve by mere study of the scriptures ? The scriptures contain a mixture of sand and sugar, as it were. It is extremely difficult to separate the sugar from the sand. Therefore one should learn the essence of the scriptures from the teacher or from a sadhu. Afterwards what does one care for books ?

(*To the devotees*) " Gather all the information and then plunge in. Suppose a pot has dropped in a certain part of a lake. Locate the spot and dive there.

" One should learn the essence of the scriptures from the guru and then practise sadhana. If one rightly follows spiritual discipline, then one directly sees God. The discipline is said to be rightly followed only when one plunges in. What will a man gain by merely reasoning about the words of the scriptures ? Ah, the fools ! They reason themselves to death over information about the path. They never take the plunge. What a pity !

" You may say, even though you dive deep you are still in danger of sharks and crocodiles, of lust and anger. But dive after rubbing your body with turmeric powder ; then sharks and crocodiles will not come near you. The turmeric is discrimination and renunciation.

(*To the devotees*) " God made me pass through the disciplines of various paths. First according to the Purana, then according to the Tantra. I also

<sup>15</sup> That is to say, realization of the identity of the guru and God.

followed the disciplines of the Vedas. At first I practised sadhana in the Panchavati. I made a grove of tulsi-plants and used to sit inside it and meditate. Sometimes I cried with a longing heart, 'Mother ! Mother !' Or again, 'Rama ! Rama !'

"While repeating the name of Rama, I sometimes assumed the attitude of Hanuman and fixed a tail to the lower end of my backbone. I was in a God-intoxicated state. At that time I used to put on a silk robe and worship the Deity. What joy I experienced in that worship !

"I practised the discipline of the Tantra under the bel-tree. At that time I could see no distinction between the sacred tulsi and any other plant. In that state I sometimes ate the leavings from a jackal's meal,<sup>16</sup> food that had been exposed the whole night, part of which might have been eaten by snakes or other creatures. Yes, I ate that stuff.

"Sometimes I rode on a dog and fed him with luchi, also eating part of the bread myself. I realized that the whole world was filled with God alone. One cannot have spiritual realization without destroying ignorance ; so I would assume the attitude of a tiger and devour ignorance.

"While practising the disciplines of the Vedas, I became a sannyasi. I used to lie down in the chandni and say to Hriday : 'I am a sannyasi. I shall take my meals here.'

"I vowed to the Divine Mother that I would kill myself if I did not see God. I said to Her : 'O Mother, I am a fool. Please teach me what is contained in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and the other scriptures.' The Mother said to me, 'The essence of the Vedanta is that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory.' The Satchidananda Brahman described in the Vedas is the Satchidananda Siva of the Tantra and the Satchidananda Krishna of the Purana. The essence of the *Gita* is what you get by repeating the word ten times. It is reversed into 'tagi', which indicates renunciation.

"After the realization of God, how far below lie the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Purana, the Tantra ! (*To Hazra*) I cannot utter the word 'Om' in samadhi. Why is that ? I cannot say 'Om' unless I come down very far from the state of samadhi.

"I had all the experiences that one should have, according to the scriptures, after one's direct perception of God. I behaved like a child, like a madman, like a ghoul, and like an inert thing.

"I saw the visions described in the scriptures. Sometimes I saw the universe filled with sparks of fire. Sometimes I saw all the quarters glittering with light, as if the world were a lake of mercury. Sometimes I saw the world as if made of liquid silver. Sometimes, again, I saw all the quarters illumined as if with the light of Roman candles. So you see my experiences tally with those described in the scriptures.

<sup>16</sup> In a certain form of Tantrik worship, food is offered to the jackals, the companions of the Goddess Kali.

<sup>17</sup> The chandni is an open portico in the temple garden with steps descending to the Ganges. According to the orthodox Hindu tradition, a monk is forbidden to live in a house.

"It was revealed to me further that God Himself has become the universe and all its living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. It is like the process of evolution and involution."

"Oh, what a state God kept me in at that time ! One experience would hardly be over before another overcame me. It was like the movement of the husking-machine : no sooner is one end down than the other goes up.

"I would see God in meditation, in the state of samadhi, and I would see the same God when my mind came back to the outer world. When looking at this side of the mirror I would see Him alone, and when looking on the reverse side I saw the same God."

The devotees listened to these words with rapt attention.

(To the Mukherji brothers) "Captain is now really in the state of the sadhaka. That the mere possession of wealth should create attachment is by no means true. Sambhu Mallick used to say to Hriday, 'Hridu, I have packed my things and am ready for the journey.' I said to him : 'God forbid ! Why do you say such ominous words ?' 'No', replied Sambhu. 'Please bless me that I may cast aside all these possessions and go to God.'

"God's devotees have nothing to fear. They are His own. He always stands by them. Once Duryodhana and his brothers were imprisoned by the gandharvas. It was Yudhishthira who freed them. Yudhishthira said, 'If our relatives are placed in such a plight, then it is our disgrace.'"

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The Mukherji brothers were ready to return to Calcutta. The Master left his seat and began to pace the room and the porch. He could hear the kirtan sung in the Vishnu temple. A devotee said that Harish and Latu were in the singing party.

Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees went to the Vishnu temple and saluted the Deity. The brahmins belonging to the staff of the temple garden, and also the priests, the cooks, and the servants, were singing the kirtan. He stood there a few minutes and encouraged the singers. On the way back to his room he remarked to the devotees, "You see, some of them polish the metal utensils and some go to houses of prostitution."

The Master returned to his room and took his seat. Presently the singers came and bowed low before him. The Master said to them : "One should perspire, dancing and singing the name of God, as people do earning money. I had thought of joining you in the dancing ; but I found that you did everything very well. You had flavoured the curry with all the seasoning. What could I add ? It will be nice if you sing devotional songs that way now and then."

The Mukherji brothers saluted the Master. Their carriage was ready near the verandah north of the room. The Master stood facing the north. On his left was the Ganges ; in front of him were the nahabat, the garden, and the kuthi ; and to his right was the road leading to the gate. The night was dark, and a devotee had brought a lantern to show the visitors their way. One by one the devotees bowed and took the dust of the Master's feet. The carriage

<sup>10</sup> That is to say, God Himself evolves as the universe, at the time of creation, and names and forms are involved back into God, at the time of dissolution.





seemed too heavily loaded for the horses. The Master said, "Aren't there too many people in the carriage?"

Sri Ramakrishna remained standing. As the carriage rolled away, the devotees looked back at the Master's face beaming with compassion and love.

*Sunday, September 21, 1884*

A large number of devotees were in Sri Ramakrishna's room, among them Ram, Mahendra Mukherji, M., and Chunilal. Chunilal had just returned from Vrindavan, where he had gone with Rakhal and Balaram. The two latter were still there. Nityagopal also was staying there. The Master began to talk with Chunilal about Vrindavan.

MASTER : "How is Rakhal?"

CHUNILAL : "He is quite well now, sir."

MASTER : "Isn't Nityagopal coming back?"

CHUNILAL : "He was still there when I left."

MASTER : "Who will bring your family back?"

CHUNILAL : "Balaram Babu told me he would arrange it with some reliable person. He didn't mention any name."

Sri Ramakrishna then spoke to Mahendra Mukherji about Narayan, a school-boy sixteen or seventeen years old, who often visited the Master and was very dear to him.

MASTER : "He is quite guileless, isn't he?"

The very uttering of the word "guileless" filled the Master with great joy.

MAHENDRA : "Yes, sir. Completely guileless."

MASTER : "His mother came here the other day. I was a little frightened to see that she was a proud woman. That day she found that Captain, you, and many others, too, visited me. Then she must have realized that she and her son were not the only people to come here. (*All laugh.*) There was some sugar candy in the room and she remarked that it was good. That made her feel there was no scarcity of food here. I happened to tell Baburam, in front of her, to keep some sweets for himself and Naran. Ganu's mother said that Naran always bothered his mother for the boat hire to come here. His mother said to me, 'Please ask Naran to consent to marry.' I replied, 'All that depends on one's fate.' Why should I interfere? (*All laugh.*) Naran is indifferent to his studies. His mother said, 'Please ask him to pay a little more attention.' So I said to Naran, 'Attend to your studies.' Then his mother said, 'Please tell him seriously.' (*All laugh.*)

(*To Chunilal*) "Why doesn't Gopal come here?"

CHUNILAL : "He has been suffering from dysentery."

MASTER : "Is he taking any medicine?"

Sri Ramakrishna was planning to go to a performance of the *Chaitanyalila* at the Star Theatre. Mahendra Mukherji was to take him to Calcutta in his carriage. They were talking about choosing good seats. Some suggested that one could see the performance well from the one-rupee gallery. Ram said, "Oh, no! I shall engage a box for him." The Master laughed. Some of the

devotees said that public women took part in the play. They took the parts of Nimai, Nitai, and others.

MASTER (to the devotees) : "I shall look upon them as the Blissful Mother Herself. What if one of them acts the part of Chaitanya? An imitation custard-apple reminds one of the real fruit. Once, while going along a road, a devotee of Krishna noticed some babla-trees. Instantly his mind was thrown into ecstasy. He remembered that the wood of babla-trees was used for the handles of the spades that the garden of the temple of Syamasundar<sup>19</sup> was dug with. The trees instantly reminded him of Krishna. I was once taken to the Maidan in Calcutta to see a balloon go up. There I noticed a young English boy leaning against a tree, with his body bent in three places. It at once brought before me the vision of Krishna<sup>20</sup> and I went into samadhi.

"Once Chaitanyadeva was passing through a village. Someone told him that the body of the drum used in the kirtan was made from the earth of that village, and at once he went into ecstasy.

"Radha could not control herself at the sight of a cloud or the blue throat of a peacock. It would at once awaken in her mind the thought of Krishna, and she would go into ecstasy."

The Master was silent a few moments and then resumed the conversation.

MASTER : "Radha had attained mahabhava. There was no desire behind the ecstatic love of the gopis. A true lover does not seek anything from God. He prays only for pure love. He doesn't want any powers or miracles.

"It is very troublesome to possess occult powers. Nangta taught me this by a story. A man who had acquired occult powers was sitting on the seashore when a storm arose. It caused him great discomfort; so he said, 'Let the storm stop.' His words could not remain unfulfilled. At that moment a ship was going full sail before the wind. When the storm ceased abruptly the ship capsized and sank. The passengers perished and the sin of causing their death fell to the man. And because of that sin he lost his occult powers and went to hell.

"Once upon a time a sadhu acquired great occult powers. He was vain about them. But he was a good man and had some austerities to his credit. One day the Lord, disguised as a holy man, came to him and said, 'Revered sir, I have heard that you have great occult powers.' The sadhu received the Lord cordially and offered him a seat. Just then an elephant passed by. The Lord, in the disguise of the holy man, said to the sadhu, 'Revered sir, can you kill this elephant if you like?' The sadhu said, 'Yes, it is possible.' So saying, he took a pinch of dust, muttered some mantras over it, and threw it at the elephant. The beast struggled awhile in pain and then dropped dead. The Lord said : 'What power you have ! You have killed the elephant !' The sadhu laughed. Again the Lord spoke : 'Now can you revive the elephant ?' 'That too is possible', replied the sadhu. He threw another pinch of charmed dust at the beast. The elephant writhed about a little and came back to life.

<sup>19</sup> A name of Krishna.

<sup>20</sup> Images of Krishna are usually bent in three parts of the body, namely, the neck, the waist, and the knees.

Then the Lord said: 'Wonderful is your power. But may I ask you one thing? You have killed the elephant and you have revived it. But what has that done for you? Do you feel uplifted by it? Has it enabled you to realize God?' Saying this the Lord vanished.

"Subtle are the ways of dharma. One cannot realize God if one has even the least trace of desire. A thread cannot pass through the eye of a needle if it has the smallest fibre sticking out.

"Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Friend, if you want to realize Me, you will not succeed if you have even one of the eight occult powers.' This is the truth. Occult power is sure to beget pride, and pride makes one forget God.

"Once a cross-eyed rich man came here. He said to me: 'You are a paramahansa. That is good. You must perform a svastyayana ceremony for me.' What a small-minded person he was! He called me a paramahansa and yet wanted me to perform that ceremony. To secure welfare by means of the svastyayana is to exercise occult power.

"An egotistic person cannot realize God. Do you know what egotism is like? It is like a high mound, where rain-water cannot collect: the water runs off. Water collects in low land. There seeds sprout and grow into trees. Then the trees bear fruit.

"Therefore I say to Hazra, 'Never think that you alone have true understanding and that others are fools.' One must love all. No one is a stranger. It is Hari alone who dwells in all beings. Nothing exists without Him.

"The Lord said to Prahlada, 'Ask a boon of Me.' 'I have seen You', replied Prahlada. 'That is enough. I don't need anything else.' But the Lord insisted. Thereupon Prahlada said, 'If You must give me a boon, let it be that those who have tortured me may not have to suffer punishment.' The meaning of those words is that it was God who tortured Prahlada in the form of his persecutors, and, if they suffered punishment, it would really be God who suffered.

"Radha was mad with prema, ecstatic love of God. But there is also the madness of bhakti. Hanuman's was such. When he saw Sita entering the fire he was going to kill Rama. Then, too, there is the madness of Knowledge. I once saw a jnani behaving like a madman. He came here very soon after the temple garden was dedicated. People said he belonged to the Brahmo Sabha of Rammohan Roy. He had a torn shoe on one foot, a stick in one hand, and a potted mango-plant in the other. After a dip in the Ganges he went to the Kali temple where Haladhari was seated. With great fervour he began to chant a hymn to the Divine Mother. Then he went up to a dog, held it by the ear, and ate some of its food. The dog didn't mind. Just at that time I too was about to experience the state of divine madness. I threw my arm around Hriday's neck and said, 'Oh, Hride! Shall I too fall into that plight?'

"I became mad. Narayan Shastri came here and saw me roaming about with a bamboo pole on my shoulder. He said to the people, 'Ah, he is mad!' In that state I could not observe any caste restrictions. The wife of a lowcaste man used to send me cooked greens, and I ate them.

"I touched my head and lips with the leaf-plates from which the beggars ate their food in the guest-house of the Kali temple. Thereupon Haladhari said

to me : 'What have you done ? You have taken the food left by beggars. How will you marry off your children ?' These words aroused my anger. Haladhari was my cousin, older than myself. But could that restrain me ? I said to him : 'You wretch ! Isn't it you who take pride in the study of the *Gita* and the Vedanta ? Isn't it you who teach people that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory ? And yet you imagine that I shall beget children ! May your mouth that recites from the *Gita* be blighted !'

(To M.) "You see, mere study of books avails nothing. One may recite the written part for the drum glibly from memory, but to play the drum is exceedingly difficult."

The Master continued with the description of his divine madness :

"Once, for a few days, I was out on an excursion with Mathur Babu in his house-boat. We took the trip for a change of air. During that trip we visited Navadvip. One day I saw the boatmen cooking their meal and stood and watched them. Mathur said to me, 'What you are doing there ?' I replied with a smile, 'The boatmen are cooking, and their food looks very good.' Mathur felt that I might ask the boatmen to give me a portion of their food ; so he said : 'Come away ! Come away !'

"But I cannot do such a thing now. I am no longer in that mood. Now the food must be cooked by a brahmin observing ceremonial purity, and be offered to the Deity ; then only can I eat it.

"Oh, what moods I passed through ! At Kamarpukur I said to Chine Sankhari and the other chums of my boyhood days, 'Oh, I fall at your feet and beg of you to utter the name of Hari.' I was about to prostrate myself before them all. Thereupon Chine said, 'This is the first outburst of your divine love ; so you don't see any distinction between one man and another.' When the storm breaks and raises the dust, then mango and tamarind trees look the same. One cannot distinguish the one from the other."

A DEVOTEE : "How can a householder keep on with his worldly duties if he is overwhelmed by such bhakti-madness or Love-madness or Knowledge-madness ?"

MASTER (looking at him) : "There are two kinds of yogis, the 'revealed' and the 'hidden'. The householder may be a 'hidden' yogi. None recognizes him. The householder should renounce mentally, not outwardly."

RAM : "You talk as if you were consoling children. A householder may be a jnani but never a vijnani."

MASTER : "He may become a vijnani in the end. But it is not good to force oneself into renunciation."

RAM : "Keshab Sen used to say : 'Why do people go to him so much ? One day he will sting them and they will flee from him.'"

MASTER : "Why should I sting people ? I say to people : 'Do *this* as well as *that*. Do your worldly duties and call on God as well.' I don't ask them to renounce everything. (With a smile) One day Keshab was delivering a lecture. He said, 'O Lord, grant us that we may dive into the river of divine

<sup>21</sup> According to the rules of Hindu society, brahmins lose their caste by eating food left or touched by people of a lower caste.



love and go straight to the Ocean of Satchidananda.' The ladies were seated behind the screen. I said to Keshab, 'How can you all dive once for all?' Pointing to the ladies, I said: 'Then what would happen to them? Every now and then you must return to dry land. You must dive and rise alternately.' Keshab and the others laughed.

"Hazra says to me, 'You love most those endowed with rajas, those who have great wealth and name and fame.' If that is so, then why do I love people like Harish and Noto?" Why do I love Narendra? He can't even afford salt to season his roast banana!"

Sri Ramakrishna left his room and went toward the pine-grove talking with M. A devotee followed them with water and towel. The Master was talking about his intended visit to the Star Theatre. He said to M.: "What Ram says applies to rajasic people. What is the use of reserving an expensive seat?"

About five o'clock that afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was on his way to Calcutta. M., Mahendra Mukherji, and a few other devotees accompanied him in Mahendra's carriage. Thinking of God, the Master soon went into an ecstatic mood. After a long time he regained consciousness of the world. He observed: "That fellow Hazra dares teach me! The rascal!" After a short pause he said, "I shall drink some water." He often made such remarks in order to bring his mind down to the sense plane.

MAHENDRA (to M.): "May I get some refreshments for him?"

M: "No, he won't eat anything now."

MASTER (still in ecstatic mood): "I shall eat."

Mahendra took the Master to his flour-mill located at Hathibagan. After a little rest Sri Ramakrishna was to go to the theatre. Mahendra did not care to take him to his own house, for the Master was not well acquainted with his father. Priyanath, Mahendra's second brother, was also a devotee of the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on a cot over which a carpet had been spread, and was engaged in spiritual talk.

MASTER (to M. and the others): "Once, while listening to the various incidents of the life of Chaitanya, Hazra said that these were manifestations of Sakti, and that Brahman, the All-pervasive Spirit, had nothing to do with them. But can there be Sakti without Brahman? Hazra wants to nullify the teachings of this place."

"I have realized that Brahman and Sakti are identical, like water and its wetness, like fire and its power to burn. Brahman dwells in all beings as the Vibhu, the All-pervasive Consciousness, though Its manifestation is greater in some places than in others. Hazra says, further, that anyone who realizes God must also acquire God's supernatural powers; that he possesses these powers, though he may or may not use them."

■: "Yes, one must have control over these supernatural powers!"  
(All laugh.)

<sup>22</sup> Referring to Latu.

<sup>23</sup> Referring to himself.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Yes, one must have them in one's grasp ! How mean ! He who has never enjoyed power and riches becomes impatient for them. But a true devotee never prays to God for them."

Sri Ramakrishna washed his face. A smoke was prepared for him. He said to M. : "Is it dusk now ? If it is, I won't smoke. During the twilight hour of the dusk you should give up all other activities and remember God." Saying this he looked at the hairs on his arm. He wanted to see whether he could count them. If he could not, it would be dusk.

About half past eight in the evening the carriage with the Master and the devotees drew up in front of the Star Theatre on Beadon Street. He was accompanied by M., Baburam, Mahendra, and two or three others. They were talking about engaging seats, when Girish Chandra Ghosh, the manager of the theatre, accompanied by several officials, came out to the carriage, greeted the Master, and took him and the party upstairs. Girish had heard of the Master and was very glad to see him at the theatre. The Master was conducted to one of the boxes. M. sat next to him ; Baburam and one or two devotees sat behind.

The hall was brilliantly lighted. The Master looked down at the pit and saw that it was crowded. The boxes also were full. For every box there was a man to fan those who occupied it. Sri Ramakrishna was filled with joy and said to M., with his childlike smile : "Ah, it is very nice here ! I am glad to have come. I feel inspired when I see so many people together. Then I clearly perceive that God Himself has become everything."

M : "It is true, sir."

MASTER : "How much will they charge us here ?"

M : "They won't take anything. They are very happy that you have come to the theatre."

MASTER : "It is all due to the grace of the Divine Mother."

The *Chaitanyalila* was about to be performed. It was a play about the early life of Sri Chaitanya, who was also known as Nimai, Gaur, Gora, and Gauranga. The curtain rose ; the attention of the audience was fixed on the stage.

The first scene depicts a council of Sin and the Six Passions. On a forest path behind them walk Viveka, Vairagya, and Bhakti, engaged in conversation.

Bhakti says to her companions : "Gauranga is born in Nadia. Therefore the vidyadharis," the munis, and the rishis have come down to earth in disguise to pay their respects to him."

She sings :

Blest indeed is the earth ! Gora is born in Nadia !  
Behold the vidyadharis, coming in chariots to adore him ;  
Behold the munis and rishis, who come, allured by the spell  
of Love.

The vidyadharis, munis, and rishis sing a hymn to Gauranga and adore him as an Incarnation of God.

Sri Ramakrishna watched the scene and was overpowered with divine ecstasy. He said to M. : " Look at it ! Ah ! Ah ! "

*Sages :* O Kesava, bestow Thy grace  
Upon Thy luckless servants here !  
O Kesava, who dost delight  
To roam Vrindavan's glades and groves !

*Goddesses :* O Madhava, our mind's Bewitcher !  
Sweet One, who dost steal our hearts,  
Sweetly playing on Thy flute !

*Chorus :* Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,  
Sing aloud the name of Hari,  
Praise Lord Hari's name !

*Sages :* O Thou Eternal Youth of Braja,  
Tamer of fierce Kaliya,  
Slayer of the afflicted's fear !

*Goddesses :* Beloved with the arching eyes  
And crest with arching peacock feather,  
Charmer of Sri Radha's heart !

*Sages :* Govardhan's mighty Lifter, Thou,  
All garlanded with sylvan flowers !  
O Damodara, Kamsa's Scourge !

*Goddesses :* O Dark One, who dost sport in bliss  
With sweet Vrindavan's gopi maids !

*Chorus :* Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,  
Sing aloud the name of Hari,  
Praise Lord Hari's name !

As the vidyadharis sang the lines,

Beloved with the arching eyes  
And crest with arching peacock feather !

the Master went into deep samadhi. The orchestra played on, but he was not aware of the outer world.

Another scene : A guest has arrived at the house of Jagannath Misra, Nimai's father. The boy Nimai plays about, singing with his friends, in a happy mood :

Tell Me, " where is My blessed Vrindavan ?  
Where is Mother Yasoda ?  
Where Father Nanda and Brother Balai ?  
Where My twin cows, black and white ?  
Tell Me, where is My magic flute ?  
My friends Sudama and Sridama ?  
Where My Jamuna's bank, My banyan ?

<sup>25</sup> In this song Gauranga identifies himself with Krishna.

Where My beloved gopi maids ?

Where is Radha, queen of My heart ?

The guest closes his eyes while offering food to the Lord. Nimai runs to him and eats the food from the plate. The guest recognizes Nimai as an Incarnation of God and seeks to please him with the Hymn of the Ten Incarnations. Before taking leave of Gauranga's parents he sings :

Glory to Gora, the Source of Bliss !  
Hail Gauranga, Redeemer of earth !  
Help of the helpless, Life of the living,  
Slayer of fear in the hearts of the fearful !  
Age after age we see Thy play—  
New sports unfolding, moods ever new ;  
New waves rolling, new tales to be told,  
Thou who bearest the whole world's burden,  
Shower on us the nectar of Love !  
Take away our grief and affliction ;  
Thou in Love's pleasure-cave dost dwell.  
Hope of the suffering ! Chastiser of sin !  
Scourge of the wicked ! Victory to Thee !

Listening to the hymn, the Master was thrilled with ecstasy.

The next scene is at Navadvip on the bank of the Ganges. After bathing in the holy water, the brahmin men and women engage in worship by the riverside. As they close their eyes, Nimai steals their food offerings and begins to eat them. A brahmin loses his temper and says : "You scapegrace ! You rascal ! You are taking away my offering for Vishnu. Ruin will seize you !" Nimai holds on to the offering and is about to run away. Many of the women love him dearly and cannot bear to have him go away. They call to him : "Return, O Nimai ! Come back, O Nimai !" Nimai turns a deaf ear to them.

One of the women, however, knows the irresistible charm that will bring him back. She loudly chants the name of Hari. Immediately he repeats the name of Hari and comes back.

M. was seated beside the Master. Sri Ramakrishna could not control himself. He cried out, "Ah !" and shed tears of love. He said to Baburam and M. : "Don't make a fuss if I fall into an ecstatic mood or go into samadhi. Then the worldly people will take me for a cheat."

Another scene : Nimai is invested with the sacred thread of the brahmins. He puts on the traditional ochre robe of the sannyasi. Mother Sachi and the women of the neighbourhood stand about while he begs for alms, singing :

Drop a morsel of food, I pray, into my begging-bowl ;  
Alone I roam, a new-made yogi, on the highways of the world.  
People of Braja, you I love, and so, time and again,  
I come to you ; at hunger's call I beg my food from door to door.  
The sun is low, and I must seek my home on the Jamuna's bank ;  
Into its waters fall my tears, as onward murmuring it flows,



The onlookers leave the stage. Nimai stands alone. The gods, in the guise of brahmin men and women, sing his praises.

*Men :* Thy body gleams like liquid moonlight ;  
Thou hast put on man's dwarfish form.  
O Lord, Thee we salute !

*Women :* Bewitcher of the gopis' hearts,  
Thou roamest in the shady groves  
About Vrindavan's vale.

*Nimai :* Hail Sri Radha ! Glory to Radha !

*Men :* The youths of Braja are Thy friends ;  
Thou curbest haughty Madan's<sup>16</sup> pride.

*Women :* Thy love has made the gopis mad ;  
In ecstasy the Jamuna thrills.

*Men :* Narayana, Deluder of demons !  
Refuge of the fear-stricken gods !

*Women :* O Lover of Braja, Thou dost beg  
The love of Braja's comely maidens !

*Nimai :* Hail Sri Radha ! Glory to Radha !

Listening to the music, the Master went into samadhi. The curtain fell and the orchestra played on.

A new scene : Srivas and other devotees are engaged in conversation in front of Advaita's house. Mukunda sings :

Sleep no more ! How long will you lie  
In maya's slumber locked, O mind ?  
Who are you ? Why have you been born ?  
Forgotten is your own true Self.  
O mind, unclothe your eyes at last  
And wake yourself from evil dreams ;  
A fool you are to bind yourself  
So to the passing shows of life,  
When in you lives Eternal Bliss.  
Come out of the gloom, O foolish mind !  
Come out and hail the rising Sun !

Sri Ramakrishna praised the voice of the singer highly.

Another scene : Nimai is staying at home. Srivas comes to visit him. First he meets Sachi. The mother weeps and says : " My son doesn't attend to his household duties. My eldest son, Viswarupa, has renounced the world, and my heart has ached ever since. Now I fear that Nimai will follow in his steps."

Nimai arrives. Sachi says to Srivas : " Look at him. Tears run down his cheeks and breast. Tell, tell me how I can free him from these notions."

At the sight of Srivas, Nimai clings to his feet and says, with eyes full of tears : " Ah me ! Revered sir, I have not yet attained

<sup>16</sup> The god of love in Hindu mythology.



devotion to Krishna. Futile is this wretched life ! Tell me, sir, where is Krishna ? Where shall I find Krishna ? Give me the dust of your feet with your blessing, that I may realize the Blue One with the garland of wild-flowers hanging about His neck."

Sri Ramakrishna looked at M. He was eager to say something but he could not. His voice was choked with emotion ; the tears ran down his cheeks ; with unmoving eyes he watched Nimai clinging to Srivas's feet and saying, "Sir, I have not yet attained devotion to Krishna."

Nimai has opened a school, but he cannot teach the students any longer. Gangadas, his former teacher, comes to persuade him to direct his attention to his worldly duties. He says to Srivas : "Listen, Srivas ! We are brahmins, too, and devoted to the worship of Vishnu. But you people are ruining Nimai's worldly prospects."

MASTER (to M.) : "That is the advice of the worldly-wise : Do 'this' as well as 'that'. When the worldly man teaches spirituality he always advises a compromise between the world and God."

M : "Yes, sir. That is true."

Gangadas continues his argument with Nimai. He says : "Nimai, undoubtedly you are versed in the scriptures. Reason with me. Explain to me if any other duty is superior to worldly duties. You are a householder. Why disregard the duties of a householder and follow others' duties ?"

MASTER (to M.) : "Did you notice ? He's trying to persuade Nimai to make a compromise."

M : "Yes, sir."

Nimai says to Gangadas : "I am not wilfully indifferent to a householder's duties. On the contrary, it is my desire to hold to all sides. But, revered sir, I don't know what it is that draws me on. I don't know what to do. I want to cling to the shore but I cannot. My soul wanders away. I am helpless. My soul constantly wants to plunge headlong into the boundless Ocean."

MASTER : "Ah me !"

The scene changes : "Nityananda has arrived at Navadip. After a search he meets Nimai, who, in turn, has been seeking him. When they meet, Nimai says to him : "Blessed is my life ! Fulfilled is my dream ! You visited me in a dream and then disappeared."

The Master said in a voice choked with emotion, "Nimai said he had seen him in a dream."

Nimai is in an ecstatic mood and becomes engaged in conversation with Advaita, Srivas, Haridas, and other devotees. Nitai sings a song suited to Nimai's mood :

Where is Krishna ? Where is my Krishna ?  
 He is not in the grove, dear friends.  
 Give me Krishna ! Bring me my Krishna !  
 Radha's heart knows naught but Him.

At this song Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. He remained in that state a long time. The orchestra played on. Gradually his mind came down to the relative plane. In the mean time a young man of Khardaha, born in the holy family of Nityananda, had entered the box. He was standing behind the Master's chair. Sri Ramakrishna was filled with delight at the sight of him. He held his hand and talked to him affectionately. Every now and then he said : "Please sit down here. Your very presence awakens my spiritual feeling." He played tenderly with the young man's hands and lovingly stroked his face.

After he had left, Sri Ramakrishna said to M. : "He is a great scholar. His father is a great devotee of God. When I go to Khardaha to visit Syamasundar, the father entertains me with sacred offerings such as one cannot buy even for a hundred rupees. This young man has good traits. A little shaking will awaken his inner spirit. At the sight of him my spiritual mood is aroused. I should have been overwhelmed with ecstasy if he had stayed here a little longer."

The curtain rises : Nityananda is walking in a procession on the public road with his companions, chanting the name of Hari. He meets two ruffians, Jagai and Madhai, who are sworn enemies of all religious people. Madhai strikes Nitai with a piece of broken pottery. Nitai is hurt and bleeds profusely, but he pays no heed, inebriated as he is with the love of God.

Sri Ramakrishna was in an ecstatic mood.

Nitai embraces both Jagai and Madhai, and sings a song to the two ruffians :

Jagai ! Madhai ! Oh, come and dance,  
 Chanting Hari's name with fervour !  
 What does it matter that you struck me ?  
 Dance, dear friends, in Hari's name !  
 Sing the name of our Beloved :  
 He will embrace you in love's rapture !  
 Let the heavens resound with His name !  
 You have not tasted true emotion :  
 Weep as you chant the name of Hari,  
 And you will see the Moon of your soul.  
 Hari's name would I lovingly give you ;  
 Nitai calls you to share His love.

\*Nimai speaks to Sachi of his desire to enter the monastic life. His mother faints and falls to the ground.

At this point many in the audience burst into tears. Sri Ramakrishna remained still and looked intently at the stage. A single tear appeared in the corner of each eye. The performance was over.

Sri Ramakrishna was about to enter a carriage. A devotee asked him how he had enjoyed the play. The Master said with a smile, "I found the representation the same as the real."

The carriage proceeded toward Mahendra's mill. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna went into an ecstatic mood and murmured to himself in loving tones : "O Krishna ! O Krishna ! Krishna is knowledge ! Krishna is soul ! Krishna is mind ! Krishna is life ! Krishna is body !" He continued : "O Govinda, Thou art my life ! Thou art my soul !"

The carriage reached the mill. Mahendra fed the Master tenderly with various dishes. M. sat by his side. Affectionately he said to M., "Here, eat a little." He put some sweets in his hands.

With Mahendra and a few other devotees, Sri Ramakrishna left in the carriage for the Dakshineswar temple garden. The Master was in a happy mood. He sang a song about Gauranga and Nitai. M. sang with him :

Gaur and Nitai, ye blessed brothers !  
I have heard how kind you are,  
And therefore I have come to you. . . .

The Master and Mahendra talked about the latter's intended pilgrimage.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "The divine love in you is barely a sprout now. Why should you let it wither ? But come back very soon. Many a time I have thought of visiting your place. At last I have done it. I am so happy."

MAHENDRA : "My life is indeed blessed, sir."

MASTER : "You were already blessed. Your father is also a good man. I saw him the other day. He has faith in the *Adhyatma Ramayana*."

MAHENDRA : "Please bless me that I may have love for God."

MASTER : "You are generous and artless. One cannot realize God without sincerity and simplicity. God is far, far away from the crooked heart."

Near Syambazar, Mahendra bade the Master good-bye, and the carriage continued on its way.



## XXIX

### THE DURGA PUJA FESTIVAL

*Friday, September 26, 1884*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA had come to Calcutta. It was the first day of the Durga Puja, the great religious festival, and the Hindus of the metropolis were celebrating it. The Master intended to visit the image of the Divine Mother at Adhar's house. He also wanted to see Shivanath, the Brahmo devotee.

It was about midday. Umbrella in hand, M. was pacing the foot-path in front of the Brahmo Samaj temple. Two hours had passed but the Master had not yet appeared. Now and then M. sat down on the steps of Dr. Mahalanavish's dispensary and watched the joy and mirth of the people, young and old, who were celebrating the Puja.

A little after three the Master's carriage drove up. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna stepped out he saluted the temple of the Brahmo Samaj with folded hands. Hazra and a few other devotees were with him. M. bowed before the Master and took the dust of his feet. The Master told him that he was going to Shivanath's house. A few minutes later several members of the Brahmo Samaj came and took him to Shivanath's. But Shivanath was not at home. Shortly afterwards Vijay Goswami, Mahalanavish, and several other Brahmo leaders greeted the Master and took him inside the Brahmo temple.

Sri Ramakrishna was in a happy mood. He was given a seat below the altar. There the Brahmo devotees sang their devotional music. Vijay and the Brahmo devotees sat in front of the Master.

MASTER (*to Vijay, with a smile*): "I was told that you had put up a 'signboard' here that people belonging to other faiths are not allowed to come in. Narendra, too, said to me: 'You shouldn't go to the Brahmo Samaj. You had better visit Shivanath's house.'

"But I say that we are all calling on the same God. Jealousy and malice need not be. Some say that God is formless, and some that God has form. I say, let one man meditate on God with form if he believes in form, and let another meditate on the formless Deity if he does not believe in form. What I mean is that dogmatism is not good. It is not good to feel that my religion alone is true and other religions are false. The correct attitude is this: My religion is right, but I do not know whether other religions are right or wrong, true or false. I say this because one cannot know the true nature of

God unless one realizes Him. Kabir used to say : 'God with form is my Mother, the Formless is my Father. Which shall I blame ? Which shall I praise ? The two pans of the scales are equally heavy.'

"Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Saktas, Saivas, Vaishnavas, the Brahmajnanis of the time of the rishis, and you, the Brahmajnanis of modern times, all seek the same object. A mother prepares dishes to suit the stomachs of her children. Suppose a mother has five children and a fish is bought for the family. She doesn't cook pilau or kalia for all of them. All have not the same power of digestion ; so she prepares a simple stew for some. But she loves all her children equally.

"Do you know my attitude ? I love all the preparations of fish. I have a womanly nature. (*All laugh.*) I feel myself at home with every dish—fried fish, fish cooked with turmeric powder, pickled fish. And further, I equally relish rich preparations like fish-head, kalia, and pilau. (*All laugh.*)

"Do you know what the truth is ? God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times, and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths ; but a path is by no means God Himself. Indeed, one can reach God if one follows any of the paths with whole-hearted devotion. Suppose there are errors in the religion that one has accepted ; if one is sincere and earnest, then God Himself will correct those errors. Suppose a man has set out with a sincere desire to visit Jagannath at Puri and by mistake has gone north instead of south ; then certainly someone meeting him on the way will tell him : 'My good fellow, don't go that way. Go to the south.' And the man will reach Jagannath sooner or later.

"If there are errors in other religions, that is none of our business. God, to whom the world belongs, takes care of that. Our duty is somehow to visit Jagannath. (*To the Brahmos*) The view you hold is good indeed. You describe God as formless. That is fine. One may eat a cake with icing, either straight or sidewise. It will taste sweet either way.

"But dogmatism is not good. You have no doubt heard the story of the chameleon. A man entered a wood and saw a chameleon on a tree. He reported to his friends, 'I have seen a red lizard.' He was firmly convinced that it was nothing but red. Another person, after visiting the tree, said, 'I have seen a green lizard.' He was firmly convinced that it was nothing but green. But the man who lived under the tree said : 'What both of you have said is true. But the fact is that the creature is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, and sometimes has no colour at all.'

"God has been described in the Vedas as both with attributes and without. You describe Him as without form only. That is one-sided. But never mind. If you know one of His aspects truly, you will be able to know His other aspects too. God Himself will tell you all about them. (*Pointing to two or three Brahmo devotees*) Those who come to your Samaj know both this gentleman and that."

Vijay still belonged to the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. He was a salaried preacher of that organization but could not obey all its rules and regulations. He mixed with those who believed in God with form. This was creating a

misunderstanding between him and the Brahmo authorities. Many Brahmos disapproved of his conduct. The Master suddenly looked at Vijay and began to talk to him.

MASTER (*to Vijay, smiling*): "I understand that they have been finding fault with you for mixing with those who believe in God with form. Is that true? He who is a devotee of God must have an understanding that cannot be shaken under any conditions. He must be like the anvil in a blacksmith's shop. It is constantly being struck by the hammer; still it is unshaken. Bad people may abuse you very much and speak ill of you; but you must bear with them all if you sincerely seek God. Isn't it possible to think of God in the midst of the wicked? Just think of the rishis of ancient times. They used to meditate on God in the forest, surrounded on all sides by tigers, bears, and other ferocious beasts. Wicked men have the nature of tigers and bears. They will pursue you to do you an injury.

"One must be careful about these few things. First, an influential man who has much money and many men under his control. He can injure you if he wants; you must be careful while talking to him; perhaps you may have to approve what he says. Second, a dog. When it chases you or barks at you, you must stand still, talk to it gently, and pacify it. Third, a bull. If it runs after you with lowered horns, you must calm it with a gentle voice. Fourth, a drunkard. If you arouse his anger, he will abuse you, naming fourteen generations of your family. You should say to him: 'Hello uncle! How are you?' Then he will be mightily pleased and sit by you and smoke.

"In the presence of a wicked person I become alert. If such a man asks me whether I have a pipe for smoking, I say, 'Yes, I have.' Some people have the nature of a snake; they will bite you without warning. You have to discriminate a great deal in order to avoid the bite; otherwise your passion will be stirred up to such an extent that you will feel like doing injury in return. The companionship of a holy man is greatly needed now and then. It enables one to discriminate between the Real and the unreal."

VIJAY: "I have no time, sir. I am entangled in my duties here."

MASTER: "You are a religious teacher. Others have holidays, but not so a religious teacher. When the manager of an estate brings order to one part of it, the landlord sends him to another part. So you have no leisure."  
(*All laugh.*)

VIJAY (*with folded hands*): "Sir, please give me your blessing."

MASTER: "Now you are talking like an ignorant person. It is God alone who blesses."

VIJAY: "Revered sir, please give us some instruction."

The Master glanced around the Brahmo temple and said with a smile, "This is nice too—a mixture of crystals and syrup." There are crystals, and there is syrup too.

\* That is to say, a mixture of worldly and spiritual ideals. The allusion is to the practice of keeping molasses in an earthen jar with a small hole at the bottom; the watery part slowly leaks out and crystals are formed inside.

"I have scored too many points and am therefore out of the game. (*All laugh.*) Do you know the game called 'nax'? It is a game of cards, and anyone scoring above seventeen is out of the game. Those who score fewer points—say five, seven, or ten—are clever. I have scored too many and am out of the game.

"Once Keshab Sen gave a lecture at his house. I was present. Many people were there. The ladies were seated behind the screen. Keshab, in the course of his talk, said, 'O God, please bless us that we may dive and disappear altogether in the river of bhakti.' I said to Keshab with a smile: 'If you disappear altogether in the river of bhakti, then what will be the fate of those behind the screen? By all means dive into the river, but you had better come back to dry land now and then. Don't disappear in the river altogether.' At these words Keshab and the others burst out laughing.

"Never mind. One can realize God in the world, too, if only one is sincere. 'I' and 'mine'—that is ignorance. But, 'O God! Thou and Thine'—that is knowledge.

"Live in the world like a maidservant in a rich man's house. She performs all the household duties, brings up her master's child, and speaks of him as 'my Hari'. But in her heart she knows quite well that neither the house nor the child belongs to her. She performs all her duties, but just the same her mind dwells on her native place. Likewise, do your worldly duties but fix your mind on God. And know that house, family, and son do not belong to you; they are God's. You are only His servant.

"I ask people to renounce mentally. I do not ask them to give up the world. If one lives in the world unattached and seeks God with sincerity, then one is able to attain Him.

(*To Vijay*) "There was a time when I too would meditate on God with my eyes closed.' Then I said to myself: 'Does God exist only when I think of Him with my eyes closed? Doesn't He exist when I look around with my eyes open?' Now, when I look around with my eyes open, I see that God dwells in all beings. He is the Indwelling Spirit of all—men, animals and other living beings, trees and plants, sun and moon, land and water.

"Why do I seek Shivanath? He who meditates on God for many days has substance in him, has divine power in him. Further, he who sings well, plays well on a musical instrument, or has mastered any one art, has in him real substance and the power of God. This is the view of the *Gita*. It is said in the *Chandi* that he who is endowed with physical beauty has in him substance and the power of God. (*To Vijay*) Ah, what a beautiful nature Kedar has! No sooner does he come to me than he bursts into tears. His eyes are always red and swim in tears, like a chanabara in syrup."

VIJAY: "At Dacca he is constantly talking about you. He is always eager to see you."

Sri Ramakrishna was about to depart. The Brahmo devotees bowed low before him and he returned their salute. Then, getting into the carriage, he set out for Adhar's house to see the image of the Divine Mother.

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to the Brahmo way of meditating on God.



Sunday, September 28, 1884

It was the day of the Mahashtami, the most auspicious day of the worship of Durga, the Divine Mother. At Adhar's invitation Sri Ramakrishna had come to Calcutta to see the holy image at his house. Before going there he went to Ram's. Many devotees, including Narendra, Baburam, M., Niranjan, Vijay, Kedar, Ram, and Surendra, were present. Balaram and Rakhal were still at Vrindavan.

MASTER (*looking at Vijay and Kedar, with a smile*): "This is a nice reunion today. You two have the same spiritual mood. (*To Vijay*) Well, what about Shivanath? Did you—?"

VIJAY: "Yes, sir, he heard that you had been to his house. I haven't seen him, but I sent him word. He knows about it."

MASTER (*to Vijay and the others*): "Four desires have come into my mind. I shall eat fish curry cooked with egg-plant. I shall visit Shivanath. The devotees will repeat the name of Hari over their beads, and I shall watch them. And the Tantrik devotees will drink consecrated wine, eight annas' worth, on the ashtami<sup>3</sup> day, and I shall watch them and salute them."

Narendra was seated in front of the Master. He was about twenty-two years old. While Sri Ramakrishna was talking thus his eyes fell upon his beloved disciple. At once the Master stood up and went into samadhi. He placed one foot on Narendra's knee. He was in a deep spiritual mood, his eyes unblinking, his mind completely unconscious of the outer world. After a long time he came down to the relative plane of consciousness; but he still appeared dazed, for the intoxication of divine bliss had not altogether left him. Speaking to himself in that ecstatic state, he repeated the name of God. He said: "Satchidananda! Satchidananda! Satchidananda! Shall I repeat that? No, it is the day of the Divine Mother, the Giver of the bliss of divine inebriation. O Mother, full of the bliss of divine inebriation! Sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. It is not good to keep the voice on 'ni'. It is not possible to keep it there very long. I shall keep it on the next lower note.

"There are different planes of consciousness: the gross, the subtle, the causal, and the Great Cause. Entering the Mahakarana, the Great Cause, one becomes silent; one cannot utter a word.

"But an Isvarakoti, after attaining the Great Cause, can come down again to the lower planes. Incarnations of God, and others like them, belong to the class of the Isvarakotis. They climb up, and they can also come down. They climb to the roof, and they can come down again by the stairs and move about on a lower floor. It is a case of negation and affirmation.<sup>4</sup> There is, for instance, the seven-storey palace of a king. Strangers have access only to the lower apartments; but the prince, who knows the palace to be his own, can move up and down from floor to floor. There is a kind of rocket that throws out sparks in one pattern and then seems to go out. After a moment it makes

<sup>3</sup> The eighth day of either half of the lunar month, an auspicious day for the followers of Tantra.

<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the aspirant at first negates the world on account of its not being God; but after divine realization he accepts the same world as the manifestation of God Himself.

another pattern, and then still another. There is no end to the patterns it can make. But there is another kind of rocket that, when it is lighted, makes only a dull sound, throws out a few sparks, and then goes out altogether. Like this second kind, an ordinary jiva, after much spiritual effort, can go to a higher plane; but he cannot come down to tell others his experiences. After much effort he may go into samadhi; but he cannot climb down from that state or tell others what he has seen there.

"There is a class of devotees, the nityasiddhas, the ever-perfect. From their very birth they seek God. They do not enjoy anything of the world. The Vedas speak of the homa bird. It lives very high in the sky. There the mother bird lays her egg. She lives so high that the egg falls for many days. While falling it is hatched. The chick continues to fall. That also goes on for many days. In the mean time the chick develops eyes. Coming near the earth, it becomes conscious of the world. It realizes it will meet certain death if it hits the ground. Then it gives a shrill cry and shoots up toward its mother. The earth means death, and it frightens the young bird; it then seeks its mother. She dwells high up in the sky, and the young bird shoots straight up in that direction. It doesn't look anywhere else.

"Those who are born as the companions of an Incarnation of God are eternally perfect. For some of them that birth is the last.

(To Vijay) "You have both—yoga and bhoga. King Janaka also had yoga and bhoga. Therefore he is called a rajarshi, both king and seer. Narada was a devarshi, and Sukadeva a brahmarshi. Yes, Sukadeva was a brahmarshi. He was not a mere jnani; he was the very embodiment of Jnana, Divine Knowledge. Whom do I call a jnani? A man who has attained Knowledge and has done so after much effort. Sukadeva was the very image of Knowledge, in other words, a form of concentrated Knowledge. He attained Knowledge spontaneously, without any labour."

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna came down to the normal mood. Then he talked freely with the devotees. The Master asked Kedar to sing.

Kedar sang :

How shall I open my heart, O friend ?

It is forbidden me to speak.

I am about to die, for lack of a kindred soul

To understand my misery. . . .

Kedar sang several other songs. After the music the Master again talked to the devotees. Nandalal, Keshab's nephew, was also present with a few Brahmo friends. They were sitting near the Master.

MASTER (to Vijay and the other devotees): "A man brought a bottle of consecrated wine for me; but I couldn't even touch it."

VIJAY: "Ah!"

MASTER: "I become intoxicated at the mere thought of God. I don't have to take any wine. I feel drunk at the very sight of the charanamrita.<sup>3</sup> I feel as if I had drunk five bottles of liquor. When a person attains such a state he cannot help discriminating about food."

<sup>3</sup> The water in which the image of the Deity is bathed; it is considered very sacred.

NARENDRA : " As regards food, one should take whatever comes."

MASTER : " What you say applies only to a particular state of the aspirant's mind. No food can harm a jnani. According to the *Gita*, the jnani himself does not eat ; his eating is an offering to the Kundalini. But that does not apply to a bhakta. The present state of my mind is such that I cannot eat any food unless it is first offered to God by a brahmin priest. Formerly my state of mind was such that I would enjoy inhaling the smell of burning corpses, carried by the wind from the other side of the Ganges. It tasted very sweet to me. But nowadays I cannot eat food touched by anybody and everybody. No, I cannot. But once in a while I do. One day I was taken to see a performance of a play at Keshab's house. They gave me luchi and curries to eat. I didn't know whether the food was handed to me by a washerman or a barber ; but I ate quite a little. (*All laugh.*) Rakhal had asked me to eat.

(*To Narendra*) " With you it is all right. You are in 'this' as well as in 'that'." You can eat everything now. (*To the devotees*) Blessed is he who feels longing for God, though he eats pork. But shame on him whose mind dwells on 'woman and gold', though he eats the purest food—boiled vegetables, rice, and ghee.

" Once I had a desire to eat dal cooked in a blacksmith's house. From my childhood I had heard the blacksmiths say, ' Do the brahmins know how to cook ? ' I ate the dal, but it smelt of the blacksmith. (*All laugh.*)

" I received the Allah mantra<sup>7</sup> from Govinda Rai. Rice with onions<sup>8</sup> was cooked for me in the kuthi. I ate some. I ate curry in Mani Mallick's garden house, but I felt a kind of repulsion to it.

" When I went to Kamarpukur, Ramlal's father was frightened. He thought I might eat at any and every house. He was frightened to think I might be expelled from the caste ; so I couldn't stay long. I came away.

" Both the Vedas and the Puranas describe pure food and conduct. But what the Vedas and the Puranas ask people to shun as impure is extolled by the Tantra as good.

" Oh, what a state of mind I passed through ! I would open my mouth, touching, as it were, heaven and the nether world with my jaws, and utter the word 'Ma'. I felt that I had seized the Mother, like a fisherman dragging fish in his net. Let me recite a song :

This time I shall devour Thee utterly, Mother Kali !  
For I was born under an evil star,  
And one so born becomes, they say, the eater of his mother.  
Thou must devour me first, or I myself shall eat Thee up ;  
One or the other it must be.

I shall besmear my hands with black,<sup>9</sup> and with black my face ;  
With black I shall besmear the whole of my body.  
And when Death seizes me, with black I shall besmear his face.

<sup>6</sup> That is to say, Narendra was attentive both to the world and to the spiritual life.

<sup>7</sup> The Master was referring to his initiation into Islam.

<sup>8</sup> The Mussalmans generally relish onions, which are forbidden to orthodox brahmins.

<sup>9</sup> Black is the colour of Kali's complexion.

O Mother, I shall eat Thee up but not digest Thee ;  
 I shall install Thee in my heart  
 And make Thee offerings with my mind.  
 You may say that by eating Kali I shall embroil myself  
 With Kala,<sup>10</sup> Her Husband, but I am not afraid ;  
 Braving His anger, I shall chant my Mother's name.  
 To show the world that Ramprasad is Kali's rightful son,  
 Come what may, I shall eat Thee up—Thee and Thy retinue—  
 Or lose my life attempting it.

"I almost became mad—such was my longing for God."

Narendra began to sing :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !  
 What need have I of knowledge or reason ? . . .

Listening to the song, the Master again went into samadhi. Coming down to the normal plane, he assumed the attitude of Girirani<sup>11</sup> and sang the agamani. He sang, intoxicated with divine love :

Tell me, my Uma, how have you fared, alone in the Stranger's house ? . . .

He said to the devotees, "Today is the Mahashtami. The Mother has come ; that is why I feel such an awakening of spiritual emotion."

KEDAR : "Lord, you are here. Are you different from the Divine Mother ?"

Sri Ramakrishna looked in another direction and sang in an absent-minded mood :

Ah, friend ! I have not found Him yet, whose love has driven me mad. . . .

Again he became ecstatic and sang of the Divine Mother. As he sang, Vijay suddenly stood up crying the name of Hari. Sri Ramakrishna, full of divine love, began to dance with Vijay and the other devotees.

The music was over. The Master, Vijay, Narendra, and the other devotees sat down. All eyes were fixed on Sri Ramakrishna, who began conversing with the devotees. He asked about their health. Kedar spoke to him humbly in a soft, sweet voice. Narendra, Chunilal, Ram, M., and Harish were sitting by the Master.

KEDAR (*humbly*) : "How can I get rid of my dizziness?"

MASTER (*tenderly*) : "One gets that. I have had it myself. Use a little almond oil. I have heard that it cures dizziness."

KEDAR : "I shall, sir."

MASTER (*to Chunilal*) : "Hello ! How is everything ?"

CHUNILAL : "Everything is all right with us now. Balaram Babu and Rakhal are well at Vrindavan."

<sup>10</sup> Siva, the Absolute.

<sup>11</sup> Consort of King Himalaya and mother of Uma.



MASTER : " Why have you sent so many sweetmeats ? (*To Harish*) Wait a day or two before coming to Dakshineswar. You are not well. You may fall ill again there. (*To Narayan, tenderly*) Sit here. Sit by me. Come to Dakshineswar tomorrow and have your meal there. (*Pointing to M.*) Come with him. (*To M.*) What do you say ? "

M. wanted to accompany Sri Ramakrishna to Dakshineswar that very day. He became thoughtful.

Surendra stood near Sri Ramakrishna. He was in the habit of drinking and often went to excess. This had worried the Master greatly, but he had not asked Surendra to give up drinking altogether. He had said to him : " Look here, Surendra ! Whenever you drink wine, offer it beforehand to the Divine Mother. See that your brain doesn't become clouded and that you don't reel. The more you think of the Divine Mother, the less you will like to drink. The Mother is the Giver of the bliss of divine inebriation. Realizing Her, one feels a natural bliss."

The Master looked at Surendra and said, " You have had a drink." With these words he went into samadhi.

It was dusk. Regaining partial consciousness, the Master sang :

Behold my Mother playing with Siva, lost in an ecstasy of joy !  
Drunk with a draught of celestial wine, She reels, and yet She does  
not fall. . . .

Then he chanted the name of Hari, clapping his hands occasionally. In a sweet voice he said : " Hari ! Hari ! O mind, chant the name of Hari ! Sing the name of Hari ! " Then he chanted : " Rama ! Rama ! Rama ! Rama ! "

Now the Master began to pray : " O Rama ! O Rama ! I am without devotion and austerity, without knowledge and love ; I have not performed any religious rites. O Rama, I have taken refuge in Thee ; I have taken shelter at Thy feet. I do not want creature comforts ; I do not seek name and fame. O Rama, I do not crave the eight occult powers ; I do not care for a hundred occult powers ! I am Thy servant. I have taken refuge in Thee. Grant, O Rama, that I may have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet ; that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya ! O Rama, I have taken refuge in Thee."

As the Master prayed all eyes were turned toward him. Hearing his piteous voice, few could restrain their tears.

Ramachandra Dutta came in and stood near him.

MASTER : " Where have you been, Ram ? "

RAM : " I was upstairs, sir."

Ram had been making arrangements for feeding the devotees on the roof of the house.

MASTER (*to Ram, with a smile*) : " Isn't it better to stay down below than to be high up ? Water accumulates in low land but flows down from a high mound."

RAM (*with a smile*) : " That is true, sir."

Supper was ready on the roof. Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees were taken there and sumptuously fed. Later the Master went to Adhar's house with M., Niranjan, and others. The Divine Mother was being worshipped

there. It had been Adhar's earnest prayer that on this sacred day Sri Ramakrishna might bless his house with his presence.

*Monday, September 29, 1884*

It was the third day of the Durga Puja. The Master had been awake in his room at Dakshineswar since early morning. The morning worship in the Kali temple was over and the orchestra had played the morning melodies in the nahabat. Brahmins and gardeners, basket in hand, were plucking flowers for the worship of the Divine Mother. Bhavanath, Baburam, Niranjana, and M. had spent the night at Dakshineswar, sleeping on the porch of the Master's room. As soon as they awoke they saw Sri Ramakrishna dancing in an ecstatic mood. He was chanting: "Victory to Mother Durga! Hallowed be the name of Durga!" He was naked and looked like a child as he chanted the name of the Blissful Mother. After a few moments he said: "Oh, the bliss of divine ecstasy! Oh, the bliss of divine drunkenness!" Then he repeatedly chanted the name of Govinda: "O Govinda! My life! My soul!"

The devotees sat on their beds and with unwinking eyes watched Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual mood. Hazra was living at the temple garden. Latu was also living there to render the Master personal service. Rakhal was still at Vrindavan. Narendra visited Sri Ramakrishna now and then. He was expected that day.

The devotees washed their faces. The Master took his seat on a mat on the north verandah. Bhavanath and M. sat beside him. Other devotees were coming in and out of the room.

MASTER (to Bhavanath): "The truth is that ordinary men cannot easily have faith. But an Isvarakoti's faith is spontaneous. Prahlada burst into tears while writing the letter 'ka'.<sup>12</sup> It reminded him of Krishna. It is the nature of jivas to doubt. They say yes, no doubt, but—

"Hazra can never be persuaded to believe that Brahman and Sakti, that Sakti and the Being endowed with Sakti, are one and the same. When the Reality appears as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, we call It Sakti; when It is inactive, we call It Brahman. But really It is one and the same thing—indivisible. Fire naturally brings to mind its power to burn; and the idea of burning naturally brings to mind the idea of fire. It is impossible to think of the one without the other.

"So I prayed to the Divine Mother: 'O Mother! Hazra is trying to upset the views of this place.' Either give him right understanding or take him from here.' The next day he came to me and said, 'Yes, I agree with you.' He said that God exists everywhere as All-pervading Consciousness."

BHAVANATH (smiling): "Did what Hazra said really make you suffer so much?"

MASTER: "You see, I am now in a different mood. I can't shout and carry on heated discussions with people. I am not in a mood now to argue and quarrel with Hazra. Hriday said to me at Jadu Mallick's garden house,

<sup>12</sup> The first consonant of the Sanskrit alphabet.

<sup>13</sup> "This place" refers to the Master himself.

'Uncle, don't you want to keep me with you?' 'No,' I said, 'I am no longer in a mood to get into heated arguments with you.'

"What is knowledge and what is ignorance? A man is ignorant so long as he feels that God is far away. He has knowledge when he knows that God is here and everywhere.

"When a man has true knowledge he feels that everything is filled with Consciousness. At Kamarpukur I used to talk to Shibu," who was then a lad four or five years old. When the clouds rumbled and lightning flashed, Shibu would say to me: 'There, uncle! They're striking matches again!' (*All laugh.*) One day I noticed him chasing grasshoppers by himself. The leaves rustled in the near-by trees. 'Hush! Hush!' he said to the leaves. 'I want to catch the grasshoppers.' He was a child and saw everything throbbing with consciousness. One cannot realize God without the faith that knows no guile, the simple faith of a child.

"Ah, what a state of mind I passed through! One day something bit me while I was sitting in the grass. I was afraid it might have been a snake, and I didn't know what to do. I had heard that if a snake bites you again immediately after its first bite, it takes back its own venom. At once I set out to discover the hole so that I might let the snake bite me again. While I was searching, a man said to me, 'What are you doing?' After listening to my story, he said, 'But the snake must bite in the very same place it has bitten before.' Thereupon I went away. Perhaps I had been bitten by a scorpion or some other insect.

"I had heard from Ramlal that the autumn chill was good for one's health. Ramlal had quoted a verse to support it. One day, as I was returning from Calcutta in a carriage, I stuck my head out of the window so that I might get all the chill. Then I fell ill." (*All laugh.*)

Sri Ramakrishna entered his room and sat down. His legs were a little swollen. He asked the devotees to feel his legs and see whether or not the pressure of their fingers made dimples. Dimples did appear with the pressure, but the devotees said that it was nothing.

MASTER (*to Bhavanath*): "Please ask Mahendra of Sinthi to see me. I shall feel better if he reassures me."

BHAVANATH (*with a smile*): "You have great faith in medicine. But we haven't so much."

MASTER: "It is God who, as the doctor, prescribes the medicine. It is He who, in one form, has become the physician. Dr. Gangaprasad asked me not to drink water at night. I regarded his statement as the words of the Vedas. I look upon him as the physician of heaven."

Hazra entered the room and sat down. The Master talked awhile about different things and then said to Hazra: "You see, many people were at Ram's house yesterday. Vijay, Kedar, and others were there. But why did I

"Hriday, the Master's nephew, had taken care of him for many years. During the latter part of his stay at Dakshineswar he had treated the Master harshly and often spoken rudely to him. Finally he had incurred the displeasure of the temple authorities. He was driven out and was not allowed to set foot in the temple garden again.

<sup>15</sup> Shivaram, a nephew of the Master.

feel so deeply stirred at the sight of Narendra ? I found that Kedar belonged to the realm of Divine Inebriation."

Presently Narendra arrived, and Sri Ramakrishna was exceedingly happy. Narendra saluted the Master and began to talk with Bhavanath and others in the room. M. was seated near by. A long mat was spread on the floor. While talking, Narendra lay on it flat on his stomach. The Master looked at him and suddenly went into samadhi. He sat on Narendra's back in an ecstatic mood.

Bhavanath sang :

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,  
Do not deprive Thy worthless child of bliss ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna came down from the plane of samadhi. He sang :

Repeat, O mind, my Mother Durga's hallowed name !  
O Gauri ! O Narayani ! to Thee I bow.  
Thou art the day, O Mother ! Thou art the dusk and the night.  
As Rama Thou drawest the bow, as Krishna Thou playest the flute ;  
As Kali all-terrible, Thou hast silenced Siva, Thy Lord.  
The ten Embodiments<sup>16</sup> of Divine Sakti art Thou,  
And Thou the ten Avatars : this time save me Thou must !  
With flowers and bel-leaves did Yasoda worship Thee,  
And Thou didst bless her by placing Krishna, the Child, in her arms.

Wherever I chance to live, O Mother, in forest or grove,  
May my mind, day and night, dwell at Thy Lotus Feet ;  
Whether at last I die a natural or sudden death,  
Oh, may my tongue repeat Durga's name at the end !  
Thou mayest send me away, O Mother, but where shall I go ?  
Tell me, Mother, where else shall I hear so sweet a name ?  
Thou mayest even say to me : " Step aside ! Go away ! "  
Yet I shall cling to Thee, O Durga ! Unto Thy feet  
As Thine anklets I shall cling, making their tinkling sound.  
When, O Mother, Thou sittest at mighty Siva's side,  
Then I shall cry from Thy feet, " Victory unto Siva ! "  
Mother, when as the Kite<sup>17</sup> Thou soarest in the sky,  
There, in the water beneath, as a minnow I shall be swimming ;  
Upon me Thou wilt pounce, and pierce me through with Thy claws.  
Thus, when the breath of life forsakes me in Thy grip,  
Do not deny me the shelter of Thy Lotus Feet !  
From the world's bondage free me, O Spouse of the Absolute !  
Thy two feet are my boat to cross this world's dark sea.  
Thou art the heavens and the earth, and Thou the nether world ;  
From Thee have the twelve Gopas and Hari and Brahma sprung.  
Whoever treads the path, repeating " Durga ! Durga ! "  
Siva Himself protects with His almighty trident.

Hazra was sitting on the northeast verandah counting the beads of his rosary. The Master went and sat in front of him, taking the rosary in his own hands.

<sup>16</sup> The Mahavidyas, or Powers, of the Divine Mother.

<sup>17</sup> According to Hindu mythology the Divine Mother at one time took the form of a bird similar to the kite.



MASTER (*to Hazra*) : "You see, I cannot use the rosary. No, perhaps I can. Yes, I can with my left hand. But I cannot repeat the name of God with it."

With these words Sri Ramakrishna tried to perform a little japa. But hardly had he begun when he went into samadhi. He sat in that state a long time, still holding the rosary in his hand. The devotees looked at him with wonder in their eyes. Hazra also watched the Master without uttering a word. After a long time Sri Ramakrishna regained consciousness of the outer world and said that he was hungry. He often said such things to bring his mind down to the normal plane. M. was going to bring something for him to eat. The Master said, "No, I shall first go to the Kali temple."

He went across the cement courtyard toward the Kali temple. On the way he bowed with folded hands to the twelve Siva temples. On the left was the temple of Radhakanta. He went there first and bowed before the image. Then he entered the Kali temple and saluted the Mother. Sitting on a carpet, he offered flowers at the Mother's holy feet. He also placed a flower on his own head. While returning from the temple he asked Bhavanath to carry the green coconut offered at the temple, and the charanamrita. Coming back to his room, accompanied by M. and Bhavanath, he saluted Hazra, who cried out in dismay : "What are you doing, sir ? What is this ?" The Master said, "Why should you say it is wrong ?" Hazra often argued with the Master, declaring that God dwelt in all beings and that everybody could attain Brahmajnana through sadhana. He had an exaggerated idea of his own spiritual progress.

It was about noon. The gong and the bells announced the worship and offering in the various temples. The brahmins, the Vaishnavas, and the beggars went to the guest-house to have their midday meal. The devotees of the Master were also to partake of the sacred offerings. He asked them to go to the guest-house. To Narendra he said : "Won't you take your meal in my room ? All right. Narendra and I will eat here." Bhavanath, Baburam, M., and the other devotees went to the guest-house.

After his meal Sri Ramakrishna rested a few minutes. The devotees on the verandah engaged in light conversation. He soon joined them and was happy in their company. It was about two o'clock. All were still sitting on the verandah, when suddenly Bhavanath appeared in the garb of a brahmachari, dressed in an ochre cloth, kamandalu in hand, his face beaming with smiles.

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "That is his inner feeling. Therefore he has dressed himself as a brahmachari."

NARENDRA : "He has put on the garb of a brahmachari ; let me put on the garb of a Tantrik worshipper."

HAZRA : "Then you will have to follow the Tantrik rituals, with women, wine, and so on."

Sri Ramakrishna did not encourage the conversation. Indeed, he made fun of it.

Suddenly the Master began to dance in an ecstatic mood. He sang :

Mother, Thou canst not trick me any more,  
For I have seen Thy crimson Lotus Feet. . . .

The Master said : " Ah, how wonderfully Rajnarayan sings about the Divine Mother ! He sings and dances that way. The music of Nakur Acharya at Kamarpukur is also wonderful. Ah, how beautiful his singing and dancing are ! "

A sadhu was staying at the Panchavati. But he was a hot-tempered man ; he scolded and cursed everyone. He came to the Master's room wearing wooden sandals and asked the Master, " Can I get fire here ? " Sri Ramakrishna saluted him and stood with folded hands as long as he remained in the room.

When he had left, Bhavanath said to the Master with a laugh, " What great respect you showed the sadhu ! "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " You see, he too is Narayana, though full of tamas. This is the way one should please people who have an excess of tamas. Besides, he is a sadhu. "

The devotees were engaged in a game of golakdham.<sup>15</sup> Hazra joined them. The Master stood by, watching them play. M. and Kishori reached " heaven ". Sri Ramakrishna bowed before them and said, " Blessed are you two brothers. " He said to M., aside, " Don't play any more. " Hazra fell into " hell ". The Master said : " What's the matter with Hazra ? Again ! " No sooner had Hazra got out of " hell " than he fell into it again. All burst into laughter. Latu, at the first throw of the dice, went to " heaven " from " earth ". He began to cut capers of joy. " See Latu's joy ! " said the Master. " He would have been terribly sad if he hadn't achieved this. (*Aside to the devotees*) This too has a meaning. Hazra is so vain that he thinks he will triumph over all even in this game. This is the law of God, that He never humiliates a righteous person. Such a man is victorious everywhere. "

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch in his room. Narendra, Baburam, Bhavanath, and M. were sitting on the floor. Narendra referred to various religious sects—the Ghoshpara, Panchanami, and others. Sri Ramakrishna described their views and condemned their immoral practices. He said that they could not follow the right course of spiritual discipline, but enjoyed sensual pleasures in the name of religion.

MASTER (*to Narendra*) : " You need not listen to these things. The bhairavas and the bhairavis of the Tantrik sect also follow this kind of discipline. While in Benares I was taken to one of their mystic circles. Each bhairava had a bhairavi with him. I was asked to drink the consecrated wine, but I said I couldn't touch wine. They drank it. I thought perhaps they would then practise meditation and japa. But nothing of the sort. They began to dance. I was afraid they might fall into the Ganges : the circle had been made on its bank. It is very honourable for husband and wife to assume the roles of bhairava and bhairavi. "

(*To Narendra and the others*) " Let me tell you this, I regard woman as my mother ; I regard myself as her son. This is a very pure attitude. There is no danger in it. To look on woman as a sister is also not bad. But to

<sup>15</sup> A game in which the player tries to get to " heaven " by passing through different " planes " ; but on each false step he falls into a particular " hell ".

assume the attitude of a 'hero', to look on woman as one's mistress, is the most difficult discipline. Tarak's father followed this discipline. It is very difficult. In this form of sadhana one cannot always maintain the right attitude.

"There are various paths to reach God. Each view is a path. It is like reaching the Kali temple by different roads. But it must be said that some paths are clean and some dirty. It is good to travel on a clean path.

"Many views, many paths—and I have seen them all. But I don't enjoy them any more; they all quarrel.

"No one else is here, and you are my own people. Let me tell you something. I have come to the final realization that God is the Whole and I am a part of Him, that God is the Master and I am His servant. Furthermore, I think every now and then that He is I and I am He."

The devotees listened to these words in deep silence.

BHAVANATH (*humbly*): "I feel disturbed if I have a misunderstanding with someone. I feel that in that case I am not able to love all."

MASTER: "Try at the outset to talk to him and establish a friendly relationship with him. If you fail in spite of your efforts, then don't give it another thought. Take refuge in God. Meditate on Him. There is no use in giving up God and feeling depressed from thinking about others."

BHAVANATH: "Great souls, such as Christ and Chaitanya, have admonished us to love all beings."

MASTER: "Love you must, because God dwells in all beings. But salute a wicked person from a distance. You speak of Chaitanya? He also used to restrain his spiritual feeling in the presence of unsympathetic people. At Srivas's house he put Srivas's mother-in-law out of the room, dragging her out by the hair."

BHAVANATH: "It was not he but others who did it."

MASTER: "Could the others have done it without his approval? What can be done? Suppose a man cannot make another love him; must he worry about it day and night? Must I waste my mind, which should be given to God, on useless things? I say: 'O Mother, I don't want Narendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal, or anybody. I seek Thee alone. What shall I do with man?'

When the Blissful Mother comes to my house, how much of the *Chandi* I shall hear!

How many monks will come here, and how many yogis with matted locks!

"When I attain God I shall attain everything. I renounced gold and silver, saying, 'Rupee is clay and clay is rupee; gold is clay and clay is gold.' With these words I threw gold, silver, and clay into the Ganges. Then I was afraid at the thought that Mother Lakshmi might be angry with me because I had treated Her wealth with contempt; that She might even stop my meals. So I prayed to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, I want Thee and nothing else.' I knew that by realizing Her I should get everything."

BHAVANATH (*smiling*): "This is the shrewd calculation of a business man."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Yes, that is so. Once the Lord was pleased with a certain devotee. He appeared before him and said: 'I am very much pleased with your austerities. Ask a boon of Me.' The devotee said, 'O Lord, if You are gracious enough to give me a boon, then please grant that I may eat from gold plates with my grandchildren.' One boon covered many things—wealth, children, and grandchildren." (*All laugh*.)

Hazra was sitting on the verandah.

MASTER: "Do you know what Hazra wants? He wants money. His family is in distress; he has debts. He thinks that God will give him money because he devotes himself to japa and meditation."

A DEVOTEE: "Can't God fulfil a devotee's desire?"

MASTER: "If it is His sweet will. But God doesn't take entire responsibility for a devotee unless the devotee is completely intoxicated with ecstatic love for Him. At a feast it is only a child whom one takes by the hand and seats at his place. Who does that with older people? Not until a man thinks so much of God that he cannot look after himself does God take on his responsibilities. Hazra doesn't inquire about his family. His son said to Ramlal: 'Please ask father to come home. We shall not ask anything of him.' These words almost brought tears to my eyes. Hazra's mother said to Ramlal: 'Please ask Pratap<sup>19</sup> to come home just once. Also ask your uncle<sup>20</sup> to request him to come home.' I told him about it, but he didn't listen to me.

"Is a mother to be trifled with? Before becoming a sannyasi Chaitanya-deva worked hard to persuade his mother to let him renounce home. Mother Sachi said that she would kill Keshab Bharati.<sup>21</sup> Chaitanyadeva did his utmost to persuade her. He said: 'Mother, I shall not renounce home if you won't let me. But if you compel me to lead a householder's life, I shall die. And, mother, even if I go away as a sannyasi, you will be able to see me whenever you desire. I shall stay near you, I shall see you every now and then.' Only when Chaitanya explained it to her thus did she give her permission. Narada could not go to the forest to practise austerity as long as his mother was alive. He had to take care of her. After her death he went away to realize God.

"When I went to Vrindavan I felt no desire to return to Calcutta. It was arranged that I should live with Gangama.<sup>22</sup> Everything was settled. My bed was to be on one side and Gangama's on the other. I resolved not to go back to Calcutta. I said to myself, 'How long must I eat a kaivarta's<sup>23</sup> food?' 'No,' said Hriday to me, 'let us go to Calcutta.' He pulled me by one hand and Gangama pulled me by the other. I felt an intense desire to live at Vrindavan. But just then I remembered my mother. That completely changed everything. She was old. I said to myself: 'My devotion to God will take

<sup>19</sup> Hazra.

<sup>20</sup> The Master.

<sup>21</sup> The guru who initiated Chaitanya into monastic life.

<sup>22</sup> A great woman saint of Vrindavan.

<sup>23</sup> A reference to the proprietors of the Dakshineswar temple, who belonged to the fisherman caste, considered low in Hindu society.



to its wings if I have to worry about my mother. I would rather live with her. Then I shall have peace of mind and be able to meditate on God.'

(To Narendra) "Why don't you say a few words to Hazra about going home? The other day he said to me, 'Yes, I shall go home and stay there three days.' But now he has forgotten all about it."

(To the devotees) "We have talked about filthy things—Ghoshpara and things like that. Govinda! Govinda! Govinda! Now chant the name of Hari. Let there be a dish of rice pudding and sweets after the ordinary lentils."

Narendra began to sing :

Fasten your mind, O man, on the Primal Purusha,  
Who is the Cause of all causes,  
The Stainless One, the Beginningless Truth.  
As Prana He pervades the infinite universe ;  
The man of faith beholds Him,  
Living, resplendent, the Root of all.  
Beyond the senses, eternal, the Essence of Consciousness,  
He shines in the cave of the heart,  
Adorned with Holiness, Wisdom, and Love ;  
By meditating on Him, man is delivered from grief.

Of countenance ever serene,  
An inexhaustible Ocean of Virtue,  
None can fathom His depths ; yet freely, of His own grace,  
Does He reveal Himself  
To those who come to His feet for shelter,  
Merciful since they are helpless and He is the Ever-forgiving,  
The Giver of happiness,  
The Ready Help in the sea of our woe.

Unswervingly just, bestowing the fruits of our deeds, good and ill,  
Yet is He the Fount of Compassion,  
The Ocean of Mercy brimming with love ;  
Even to hear of His glory suffuses the eyes with tears.  
Gaze on His face and be blest :  
Your heart is hungry for Him, O man !  
Bright with unspeakable beauty, peerless and without stain,  
No words can ever describe Him ;  
Be as a beggar before His gate  
And worship Him day and night, beseeching Him for His grace.

He sang again :

In Wisdom's firmament the moon of Love is rising full,  
And Love's flood-tide, in surging waves, is flowing everywhere.  
O Lord, how full of bliss Thou art ! Victory unto Thee !

On every side shine devotees, like stars around the moon ;  
Their Friend, the Lord All-merciful, joyously plays with them.  
Behold ! the gates of paradise today are open wide. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna was dancing in a circle. The devotees joined him. They all sang and danced. Their bliss was indescribable. The Master sang about the Divine Mother :

Behold my Mother playing with Siva, lost in an ecstasy of joy ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna was highly pleased because M. had joined in the music. He said to M., with a smile, "The atmosphere would have been more intense with divine fervour if a drum had accompanied the music and played : 'Tak tak ta dhina ! Dak dak da dhina !'"

It was dusk when the kirtan was finished.

*Wednesday, October 1, 1884*

Sri Ramakrishna had set out from Dakshineswar for Adhar's house in Calcutta. Narayan and Gangadhar were with him. In the carriage, in an ecstatic mood, he said : "Shall I count the beads ? How shameful that would be ! This emblem of Siva has sprung from the bowels of the earth ; it is self-created and not set up by man's hands."

They arrived at Adhar's house, where many devotees, including Kedar, Baburam, and Vijay, had assembled. Vaishnavcharan, the musician, was present. At the Master's behest, Adhar heard Vaishnavcharan's music daily after his return from the office.

When the Master entered Adhar's drawing-room the devotees stood up to receive him. Kedar and Vijay saluted him, and the Master asked Narayan and Baburam to salute Kedar and Vijay. He asked Kedar and Vijay to bless Narayan and Baburam that they might have devotion to God. Pointing to Narayan he said, "He is utterly guileless." The eyes of the devotees were fixed on the two boys.

MASTER (to Kedar and the other devotees) : "It is good that I have met you all here ; otherwise perhaps you would have come to the Kali temple to see me. Through the will of God, however, we have met here."

KEDAR (with folded hands) : "The will of God ! It is all your will."

Sri Ramakrishna smiled. Vaishnavcharan began a kirtan about Radha and Krishna. When the music was nearing its end, with the union of Radha and Krishna, the Master began to dance with ecstatic fervour. The devotees danced and sang around him. After the music they all sat down. The Master said to Vijay, referring to Vaishnavcharan, "He sings very well." He asked the musician to sing the song about Sri Chaitanya, beginning with the line, "The beautiful Gaurāṅga, the youthful dancer, fair as molten gold."

When the song was over, the Master asked Vijay, "How did you like it ?"

VIJAY : "Wonderful."

Sri Ramakrishna also sang a song about Sri Chaitanya, M. joining him. Then Vaishnavcharan sang another song :

O my flute, sing Hari's name !  
 You cannot know the highest Truth  
 Without Lord Hari's grace.  
 His name removes our bitter grief ;  
 Repeat the name of Hari, then,  
 Repeat Sri Krishna's holy name !  
 If He bestows His grace on me,  
 No longer shall I be afraid  
 Of this unfriendly world ;

Sing then Lord Hari's name, my flute !  
Our only treasure is His name.

Govinda says : Behold, my days  
Are passing by in vain ;  
In the world's deep and shoreless sea,  
Oh, let me not be drowned !

Vaishnavcharan sang again, this time about Mother Durga :

O tongue, always repeat the name of Mother Durga ;  
Who but your Mother Durga will save you in distress ? . . .

The Master and the musician sang again and again the following lines from the song :

The moving and the unmoving, the gross and the subtle, art Thou ;  
Creation and preservation art Thou, and the last dissolution.  
Thou art the Primal Root of this manifold universe ;  
The Mother of the three worlds, their only Saviour, art Thou ;  
Thou art the Sakti of all, and Thou Thine own Sakti, too.

Kedar and several devotees stood up. They were about to return home. Kedar saluted the Master and bade him good-bye.

MASTER : "Should you go away without bidding Adhar good-bye ? Wouldn't that be an act of discourtesy ?"

KEDAR : "'When God is pleased, the world is pleased.' You are staying ; so in a sense we are all staying. I am not feeling well. Besides, I am a little nervous about my social conventions." Once before I had trouble with our community."

VIJAY (*pointing to the Master*) : "Should we go away and leave him here ?"

Just then Adhar came in to take the Master to the dining-room, for the meal was ready. Sri Ramakrishna stood up and said, addressing Kedar and Vijay : "Come. Come with me." They followed him and partook of the dinner together with the other devotees.

After dinner they all returned to the drawing-room, where the devotees sat around the Master. Kedar said to him with folded hands, "Please forgive me for hesitating to eat here." Perhaps the thought had come to his mind that he should not have hesitated, since the Master himself had no scruples about eating at Adhar's house.

Kedar worked at Dacca. Many devotees brought offerings of sweets and other food for him. Referring to this, Kedar said to the Master : "People want to give me food. What should I do ? Lord, what is your command in this matter ?"

MASTER : "One can eat food even from an untouchable if the untouchable is a devotee of God. After spending seven years in a God-intoxicated state at Dakshineswar, I visited Kamarpukur. Oh, what a state of mind I was in

<sup>24</sup> Adhar belonged to a lower caste. Kedar, a brahmin, could not dine with him or eat at his home.

at that time ! Even a prostitute fed me with her own hands. But I cannot allow that now."

Kedar was about to take his leave.

KEDAR (*in a low voice*): "Lord, please transmit power to me. Many people come to me. What do I know?"

MASTER: "Everything will be all right. One gets along well if one is sincerely devoted to God."

Yogendra, the editor of a Bengali paper, the *Bangavasi*, entered the room. The conversation turned to the Personal God and God without form.

MASTER: "God has form; again, He is formless. How many aspects He has ! We cannot comprehend Him. Why should we say that God is formless only?"

YOGENDRA: "That is the one amazing thing about the Brahmo Samaj. There even a boy twelve years old sees God as formless. The members of the Adi Samaj" do not object very much to God with form. They are allowed to attend ritualistic worship if it takes place in respectable families."

MASTER (*smiling*): "How nicely he has put it ! Even a boy sees the formless God !"

ADHAR: "Shivanath Babu does not believe in God's forms."

VIJAY: "That is his mistake. (*Pointing to the Master*) As he says, the chameleon assumes different colours—now this colour, now that. Only the man who lives under the tree knows the animal's true colour.

"While meditating I saw images of gods painted on a canvas. How many gods ! How many different things they said ! I said to myself: 'I shall go to the Master. He will explain it all to me.'"

MASTER: "You saw correctly."

KEDAR: "God assumes forms for the sake of His devotees. Through ecstatic love a devotee sees God with form. Dhruva had a vision of the Lord. He said: 'Why don't Your ear-rings move?' The Lord said, 'They will move if you move them.'"

MASTER: "One must accept everything: God with form and God without form. While meditating in the Kali temple I noticed Ramani, a prostitute. I said, 'Mother, I see that Thou art in that form too.' Therefore I say one must accept everything. One does not know when or how God will reveal Himself."

The Master sang:

A mendicant has come to us, ever absorbed in divine moods. . . .

VIJAY: "God has infinite power. Can He not reveal Himself in any form He chooses? Man is a speck of dust, and he dares come to a conclusion about God. How amazing !"

MASTER: "A man reads a little of the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, or the Vedanta and thinks he has understood everything. Once an ant went to a hill of sugar. One grain of sugar filled its stomach, and it was returning home with another grain in its mouth. On the way it said to itself, 'Next time I go, I shall bring home the whole hill.' " (*All laugh.*)

<sup>25</sup> A branch of the Brahmo Samaj.



## XXX

### THE MASTER IN VARIOUS MOODS

Thursday, October 2, 1884

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting in his room at Dakshineswar. Latu, Ramlal, Harish, and Hazra were living with him at the temple garden. Baburam spent a day or two with him now and then.

Manilal Mallick, Priya Mukherji and his relative Hari, a bearded Brahmo devotee from Shibpur, and several Marwari devotees from Calcutta were in the Master's room. Manilal was an old member of the Brahmo Samaj.

MASTER (*to Manilal and the others*): "It is wise to salute a person mentally. What need is there of touching his feet? Mental salutation doesn't embarrass anybody.

"The attitude that my religion alone is right and all other religions are false is not good. I see that God Himself has become all these: men, images, and salagram. I see one alone in all these; I do not see two. I see only one.

"Many people think that their opinion alone is right and others' opinions are wrong; that they alone have won and others have lost. But a person who has gone forward may be detained by some slight obstacle, and someone who has been lagging behind may then steal a march on him. In the game of golakdham one may advance a great deal, but still somehow one's piece may fail to reach the goal.

"Triumph or defeat is in the hands of God. We cannot understand His ways. You must have noticed that the green coconut remains high in the tree and is exposed to the sun, but still its milk is cool. On the other hand the paniphal<sup>1</sup> remains in the water, but when eaten it heats the body.

"Look at the body of man. The head is the root, and it is at the top."

MANILAL: "What then is our duty?"

MASTER: "To remain somehow united with God. There are two ways: karmayoga, and manoyoga. Householders practise yoga through karma, the performance of duty. There are four stages of life: brahmacharya, garhasthya, vanaprastha, and sannyasa. Sannyasis must renounce those karmas which are performed with special ends in view; but they should perform the daily obligatory karmas, giving up all desire for results. Sannyasis are united with

<sup>1</sup> A kind of aquatic fruit.

God by such karmas as the acceptance of the staff, the receiving of alms, going on pilgrimage, and the performance of worship and japa.

"It doesn't matter what kind of action you are engaged in. You can be united with God through any action provided that, performing it, you give up all desire for its result.

"There is the other path : manoyoga. A yogi practising this discipline doesn't show any outward sign. He is inwardly united with God. Take Jadabharata and Sukadeva, for instance. There are many other yogis of this class, but these two are well known. They shave neither hair nor beard.

"All actions drop away when a man reaches the stage of the paramahansa. He always remembers the ideal and meditates on it. He is always united with God in his mind. If he ever performs an action it is to teach men.

"A man may be united with God either through action or through inwardness of thought, but he can know everything through bhakti. Through bhakti one spontaneously experiences kumbhaka. The nerve currents and breathing calm down when the mind is concentrated. Again, the mind is concentrated when the nerve currents and breathing calm down. Then the buddhi, the discriminating power, becomes steady. The man who achieves this state is not himself aware of it.

"One can attain everything through bhaktiyoga. I wept before the Mother and prayed, 'O Mother, please tell me, please reveal to me, what the yogis have realized through yoga and the jnanis through discrimination.' And the Mother has revealed everything to me. She reveals everything if the devotee cries to Her with a yearning heart. She has shown me everything that is in the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Puranas, and the Tantra."

MANILAL : "And what about hathayoga ?"

MASTER : "The hathayogis identify themselves with their bodies. They practise internal washing and similar disciplines, and devote themselves only to the care of the body. Their ideal is to increase longevity. They serve the body day and night. That is not good.

"What is your duty ? You should renounce 'woman and gold' mentally. You cannot look on the world as crow-droppings.

"The goswamis are householders. Therefore I said to them : 'You have your duties in the temple : how can you renounce the world ? You cannot explain away the world as maya.'

"Chaitanyadeva said that the duties of householders were kindness to living beings, service to the Vaishnavas, and the chanting of God's holy name.

"Keshab Sen once said about me : 'Now he asks us to hold to both—God and the world. But one day he will sting us.' No, that is not true. Why should I sting ?"

MANI MALICK : "But, sir, you do."

MASTER (smiling) : "How so ? You are a householder. Why should you renounce ?

"But the renunciation of the world is needful for those whom God wants to be teachers of men. One who is an acharya should give up 'woman and gold' ; otherwise people will not take his advice. It is not enough for him to

renounce only mentally ; he should also renounce outwardly. Only then will his teaching bear fruit. Otherwise people will think, ' Though he asks us to give up " woman and gold " , he enjoys them himself in secret. '

" A physician prescribed medicine for a patient and said to him, ' Come another day and I'll give you directions about diet. ' The physician had several jars of molasses in his room that day. The patient lived very far away. He visited the physician later and the physician said to him : ' Be careful about your food. It is not good for you to eat molasses. ' After the patient left, another person who was there said to the physician : ' Why did you give him all the trouble of coming here again ? You could very well have given him the instructions the first day. ' The physician replied with a smile : ' There is a reason. I had several jars of molasses in my room that day. If I had asked the patient then to give up molasses, he would not have had faith in my words. He would have thought : " He has so many jars of molasses in his room, he must eat some of it. Then molasses can't be so bad. " Today I have hidden the jars. Now he will have faith in my words. '

" I have seen the acharya of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. I understand that he has married for the second or third time. He has grown-up children. And such men are teachers ! If they say, ' God is real and all else illusory ' , who will believe them ? You can very well understand who will be their disciples.

" Like teacher, like disciple. Even if a sannyasi renounces ' woman and gold ' mentally, but lives with them outwardly, he cannot be a teacher of men. People will say that he enjoys ' molasses ' secretly.

" Once Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi gave five rupees to Ramlal. I didn't know about it. When Ramlal told me about the money, I asked him, ' For whom was the money given ? ' He said it was for me. At first I thought that I should use it to pay what I owed for my milk. But will you believe me ? I had slept only a little while when I suddenly woke up writhing with pain, as if a cat were scratching my chest. I went to Ramlal and asked him again, ' Was the money given for your aunt ? ' ' No ' , Ramlal answered. Thereupon I said to him, ' Go at once and return the money. ' Ramlal gave it back the next day.

" Do you know how it looks for a sannyasi to accept money or to be attached to an object of temptation ? It is as if a brahmin widow who had practised continence and lived on simple boiled rice and vegetables and milk for many years, were suddenly to accept an untouchable as her paramour. *(All look stunned.)*

" There was a low-caste woman named Bhagi Teli in our part of the country. She had many disciples and devotees. Finding that she, a sudra, was being saluted by people, the landlord became jealous and engaged a wicked man to tempt her. He succeeded in corrupting her and all her spiritual practice came to nothing. A fallen sannyasi is like that.

" You are leading householders' lives. It is necessary for you to live in the company of holy men. First of all, the company of holy men ; then sraddha, faith in God.

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Mother, his wife.

"How can people have reverence and faith in God if the holy men do not sing His name and glories? People respect a man if they know that in his family there have been royal ministers for three generations.

(To M.) "Even if one has attained Knowledge, one must still constantly practise God-Consciousness. Nangta used to say: 'What is the use of polishing the outside of a metal pot one day only? If you don't polish it regularly it will get tarnished again.' I shall have to go to your house some time. If I know your house I can meet other devotees there. Please go to see Ishan some time.

(To Manilal) "Keshab Sen's mother came here the other day. The young boys of her family sang the name of Hari. She went around them clapping her hands. I noticed she was not very much stricken with grief over Keshab's death. She observed the fast of ekadasi here and counted her beads. I was pleased to see her devotion to God."

MANILAL: "Ramkamal Sen, Keshab Babu's grandfather, was a devotee of God. He used to sit in a tulsi-grove and repeat God's holy name. Pyari-mohan, Keshab's father, was also a Vaishnava devotee."

MASTER: "The son could not have been so devoted to God if the father had not been like that. Look at Vijay. His father would become unconscious of the world in divine ecstasy while reading the *Bhagavata*. Vijay can hardly control his emotion: while uttering Hari's name, he sometimes stands up from his seat. The forms of God that Vijay sees nowadays are all real. Speaking about the different aspects of God, formless and with form, Vijay said that God sometimes appears with attributes and sometimes without attributes. He gave the example of the chameleon, which sometimes turns red, sometimes blue, sometimes green, and sometimes remains colourless.

"Vijay is really guileless. One cannot realize God without being guileless and liberal-minded. Yesterday Vijay was at Adhar Sen's house. He behaved as if it were his own place and those who lived there his own people. One cannot be guileless and liberal-minded unless one is free from worldliness."

Then the Master sang:

You will attain that priceless Treasure when your mind is free  
from stain. . . .

He continued: "You cannot make a pot without first carefully preparing the clay. The pot will crack if the clay contains particles of sand or stone. That is why the potter first prepares the clay by removing the sand and stones.

"If a mirror is covered with dirt, it won't reflect one's face. A man cannot realize his true Self unless his heart is pure. You will find guilelessness wherever God incarnates Himself as man. Nandaghosh, Dasaratha, Vasudeva—all of them were guileless.

"The Vedanta says that a man does not even desire to know God unless he has a pure mind. One cannot be guileless and liberal-minded without much tapasya, or unless it is one's last birth."



Sri Ramakrishna was worrying, like a child, because he thought his legs were slightly swollen. Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi entered the room and saluted the Master.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "Yesterday I said to Naran, 'Just press your leg and see if there is any dimple.' He pressed it and there was one. Then I gave a sigh of relief. (*To Mukherji*) Will you please press your leg? Is there any dimple?"

MUKHERJI: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "Ah, what a relief!"

MANI MALICK: "Why should you worry about it, sir? Please take your bath in the river. Why should you take medicine?"

MASTER: "No, sir. You have strong blood. Your case is different. The Divine Mother has placed me in the state of a child. One day I was bitten by something in the jungle. I had heard people say that, in case of snakebite, the poison would come out if the snake bit again. So I put my hand in a hole and waited. A man passing by said to me: 'What are you doing? You will get rid of the poison only if the snake bites again in the same place. You will not be cured if the snake bites another part of your body.'

"I was told that the autumn dew was good. One day, while coming from Calcutta, I stuck my head out of the carriage and exposed it to the damp air. (*All laugh.*)

(*To Mahendra of Sinthi*) "That pundit from Sinthi is very good. He holds a title for his scholarship. He respects me. I said to him, 'You have read a great deal; but give up the vanity that you are a scholar.' That made him very happy. I discussed Vedanta with him.

(*To M.*) "That which is Pure Atman is unattached. Maya, or avidya, is in It. In maya there are three gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. These three gunas also exist in the Pure Atman. But Atman itself is unattached. If you throw a blue pill into the fire, you will see a blue flame. If you throw a red pill, you will see a red flame. But fire itself has no colour of its own.

"If you put a blue pill in water, the water will turn blue. Again, if you put alum in that water, it will regain its natural colour.

"A butcher was carrying a load of meat when he touched Sankara. Sankara exclaimed: 'What! You have touched me!' The butcher replied: 'Venerable sir, neither have you touched me nor have I touched you. You are Pure Atman, unattached.' Jadabharata said the same thing to King Rahugana.

"The Pure Atman is unattached, and one cannot see It. If salt is mixed with water, one cannot see the salt with the eyes.

"That which is the Pure Atman is the Great Cause, the Cause of the cause. The gross, the subtle, the causal, and the Great Cause. The five elements are gross. Mind, buddhi, and ego are subtle. Prakriti, the Primal Energy, is the cause of all these. Brahman, Pure Atman, is the Cause of the cause.

"This Pure Atman alone is our real nature. What is jnana? It is to know one's own Self and keep the mind in It. It is to know the Pure Atman.

"How long should a man perform his duties? As long as he identifies himself with the body, in other words, as long as he thinks he is the body,

That is what the *Gita* says. To think of the body as the Atman is ajnana, ignorance.

(To the bearded Brahmo devotee from Shibpur) "Are you a Brahmo?"

DEVOTEE: "Yes, sir."

MASTER (smiling): "I can recognize a worshipper of the Formless by looking at his face and eyes. Please dive a little deeper. One doesn't get the gem by floating on the surface. As for myself, I accept all—the formless God and God with form."

The Marwari devotees from Burrabazar entered the room and saluted the Master. He began to praise them.

MASTER (to the devotees): "Ah! They are real devotees of God. They visit temples, sing hymns to God, and eat prasad. And the gentleman whom they have made their priest this year is learned in the *Bhagavata*."

MARWARI DEVOTEE: "Who is this 'I' that says, 'O Lord, I am Thy servant'?"

MASTER: "This is the lingasarira, or embodied soul. It consists of manas, buddhi, chitta, and ahamkara."

DEVOTEE: "Who is the embodied soul?"

MASTER: "It is the Atman bound by the eight fetters. And what is the chitta? It is the 'I-consciousness' that says, 'Aham'."

DEVOTEE: "Revered sir, what happens after death?"

MASTER: "According to the *Gita*, one becomes afterwards what one thinks of at the time of death. King Bharata thought of his deer and became a deer in his next life. Therefore one must practise sadhana in order to realize God. If a man thinks of God day and night, he will have the same thought in the hour of death."

DEVOTEE: "Why don't we feel dispassion toward worldly objects?"

MASTER: "Because of maya. Through maya one feels the Real to be the unreal and the unreal to be the Real. The Real means That which is eternal, the Supreme Brahman; and the unreal means that which is non-eternal, that is to say, the world."

DEVOTEE: "We read the scriptures. Why is it that we can't assimilate them?"

MASTER: "What will one accomplish by mere reading? One needs spiritual practice—austerity. Call on God. What is the use of merely repeating the word 'siddhi'? One must eat a little of it."

"The hand bleeds when it touches a thorny plant. Suppose you bring such a plant and repeat, sitting near it: 'There! The plant is burning. Will that burn the plant? This world is like the thorny plant. Light the fire of Knowledge and with it set the plant ablaze. Only then will it be burnt up.'

"One must labour a little while at the stage of sadhana. Then the path becomes easy. Steer the boat around the curves of the river and then let it go with the favourable wind."

"As long as you live inside the house of maya, as long as there exists the cloud of maya, you do not see the effect of the Sun of Knowledge. Come outside the house of maya, give up 'woman and gold', and then the Sun of

Knowledge will destroy ignorance. A lens cannot burn paper inside the house. If you stand outside, then the rays of the sun fall on the lens and the paper burns. Again, the lens cannot burn the paper if there is a cloud. The paper burns when the cloud disappears.

"The darkness of the mind is destroyed only when a man stands a little apart from 'woman and gold' and, thus standing apart, practises a little austerity and spiritual discipline. Then only does the cloud of his ego and ignorance vanish. Then only does he attain the Knowledge of God. This 'woman and gold' is the only cloud that hides the Sun of Knowledge.

(*To the Marwari devotee*) "The rules for a sannyasi are extremely hard. He cannot have the slightest contact with 'woman and gold'. He must not accept money with his own hands, and he must not even allow it to be left near him.

"Lakshminarayan Marwari, a Vedantist, used to come here very often. One day he saw a dirty sheet on my bed and said : 'I shall invest ten thousand rupees in your name. The interest will enable you to pay your expenses.' The moment he uttered these words, I fell unconscious, as if struck by a stick. Regaining consciousness I said to him : 'If you utter such words again, you had better not come here. It is impossible for me to touch money. It is also impossible for me to keep it near me.' He was a very clever fellow. He said : 'Then you too have the idea of acceptance and rejection. In that case you haven't attained Perfect Knowledge.' 'My dear sir,' I said, 'I haven't yet gone that far.' (*All laugh.*) Lakshminarayan then wanted to leave the money with Hriday. I said to him : 'That will not do. If you leave it with Hriday, then I shall instruct him to spend it as I wish. If he does not comply, I shall be angry. The very contact of money is bad. No, you can't leave it with Hriday.' Won't an object kept near a mirror be reflected in it ?"

DEVOTEE : "Revered sir, is a man liberated only when he dies on the bank of the Ganges ?"

MASTER : "It is the Knowledge of God alone that gives liberation. The jnani will certainly attain liberation wherever he may die, whether in the charnel-pit or on the bank of the Ganges. But the bank of the Ganges is prescribed for a bound soul."

DEVOTEE : "Revered sir, why does a man dying in Benares become liberated ?"

MASTER : "A person dying in Benares sees the vision of Siva. Siva says to him : 'This is My aspect with form, My embodiment in maya. I assume this form for the sake of the devotees. Now look. I am merging in the indivisible Satchidananda !' Uttering these words, Siva withdraws His form and enables the dying person to see Brahman.

"The Puranas say that even a chandala endowed with love of God achieves liberation. According to this school the name of God is enough to liberate a soul. There is no need of such things as worship, sacrifice, the discipline of Tantra, and the recitation of mantras.

"But the teachings of the Vedas are different. According to the Vedas none but a brahmin can be liberated. Further, the worship is not accepted by

the gods unless the mantras are recited correctly. One must perform sacrifice, worship, and so on, according to scriptural injunction. But where is the time in the Kaliyuga to perform the Vedic rituals? Therefore in the Kaliyuga the path of devotion prescribed by Narada is best. The path of karma is very difficult. Karma becomes a cause of bondage unless it is performed in a spirit of detachment. Further, the life of man nowadays depends on food. He has no time to observe the rituals enjoined by the scriptures. The patient dies if he tries to cure his fever by taking the decoction of herbs prescribed by the orthodox native physicians. Therefore he should take a modern 'fever mixture'.

"According to Narada the devotee should sing the name and glories of God. The path of karma is not the right one for the Kaliyuga. Bhaktiyoga is the right path. Do your duties in the world as long as you need them to reap the fruit of the actions of your past lives. But you must develop love for God and be passionately attached to Him. The singing of the name and glories of God destroys the effect of past action.

"You don't have to perform duties all your life. As you develop unalloyed love and longing for God, your duties become fewer and fewer. After the realization of God they completely drop away. When the young daughter-in-law is pregnant, her mother-in-law lessens her duties. After the birth of the child she doesn't have to do any household work."

Several young men from the village of Dakshineswar entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. They sat down and began to talk with the Master.

YOUNG MAN : "Sir, what is Knowledge?"

MASTER : "It is to know that God is the only Reality and that all else is unreal. That which is the Real is also called Brahman. It has another name : Kala, Time. There is a saying, 'O brother, how many things come into being in Time and disappear in Time!'

"That which sports with Kala is called Kali. She is the Primal Energy. Kala and Kali, Brahman and Sakti, are indivisible.

"That Brahman, of the nature of Reality, is eternal. It exists in past, present, and future. It is without beginning or end. It cannot be described in words. The utmost that can be said of Brahman is that It is of the very nature of Intelligence and Bliss.

"The world is illusory; Brahman alone is real. The world is of the nature of magic. The magician is real but his magic is unreal."

YOUNG MAN : "If the world is of the nature of illusion—magic—then why doesn't one get rid of it?"

MASTER : "It is due to the samskaras, inborn tendencies. Repeated births in this world of maya make one believe that maya is real.

"Let me tell you how powerful inborn tendencies are. A prince had, in a previous birth, been the son of a washerman. While playing with his chums in his incarnation as the prince, he said to them : 'Stop those games. I will show you a new one. I shall lie on my belly, and you will beat the clothes on my back as the washerman does, making a swishing sound.'



"Many youngsters come here. But only a few long for God. These few are born with a spiritual tendency. They shudder at the talk of marriage. Niranjan has said from boyhood that he will not marry.

"More than twenty years ago two young men used to come here from Baranagore. One was named Govinda Pal and the other Gopal Sen. They had been devoted to God since boyhood. The very mention of marriage would frighten them. Gopal used to have bhava samadhi. He would shrink from worldly people, as a mouse from a cat. One day he saw the boys of the Tagore family strolling in the garden. He shut himself in the kuthi lest he should have to talk with them.

"Gopal went into samadhi in the Panchavati. In that state he said to me, touching my feet : 'Let me go. I cannot live in this world any more. You have a long time to wait. Let me go.' I said to him, in an ecstatic mood, 'You must come again.' 'Very well, I will', he said. A few days later Govinda came to me. 'Where is Gopal ?' I asked him. He said, 'He has passed away.'

"What are the other youngsters about ? Money, house, carriage, clothes, and finally marriage. These are the things that keep them busy. If they want to marry, at the outset they make inquiries about the girl. They want to find out for themselves whether she is beautiful.

"There is a person who speaks much ill of me. He is always criticizing me for loving the youngsters. I love only those who are born with good tendencies, pure souls with longing for God, who do not pay any attention to money, creature comforts, and such things.

"If married people develop love for God, they will not be attached to the world. Hirananda is married. What if he is ? He will not be much attached to the world."

Hirananda, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, was a native of Sindh. He had met the Master in Calcutta and become devoted to him.

Manilal, the Marwari devotees, the Brahmo devotees from Shibpur, and the young men from Dakshineswar saluted Sri Ramakrishna and took their leave.

It was evening. Lamps were lighted on the south and west verandahs. A lamp was lighted in the Master's room also, and incense was burnt. He was repeating the name of the Divine Mother, absorbed in contemplation of Her. After a while he talked again to the devotees. There was still some time before the evening worship in the temples.

MASTER (to M.): "What need of the sandhya has a man who thinks of God day and night ?

What need of rituals has a man, what need of devotions any more, If he repeats the Mother's name at the three holy hours ?

Rituals may pursue him close, but never can they overtake him.

Charity, vows, and giving of gifts do not appeal to Madan's mind ;

The Blissful Mother's Lotus Feet are his whole prayer and sacrifice.

"The sandhya merges in the Gayatri, the Gayatri in Om. A man is firmly established in spiritual life when he goes into samadhi on uttering 'Om' only once.

"There is a sadhu in Hrishikesh who gets up early in the morning and stands near a great waterfall. He looks at it the whole day and says to God : 'Ah, You have done well ! Well done ! How amazing !' He doesn't practise any other form of japa or austerity. At night he returns to his hut.

"What need is there even to bother one's head about whether God is formless or has a form ? It is enough for a man to pray to Him, alone in solitude, weeping, 'O God, reveal Yourself to me as You are.'

"God is both inside and outside. It is He who dwells inside us. Therefore the Vedas say, 'Tattvamasi—That thou art.' God is also outside us. He appears manifold through maya ; but in reality He alone exists. Therefore before describing the various names and forms of God, one should say, 'Om Tat Sat.'<sup>3</sup>

"It is one thing to learn about God from the scriptures, and quite another to see Him. The scriptures only give hints. Therefore to read a great many scriptures is not necessary. It is much better to pray to God in solitude.

"It isn't necessary to read all of the *Gita*. One can get the essence of the *Gita* by repeating the word ten times. It becomes reversed and is then 'tagi'. The essence of the book is : 'O man, renounce everything and worship God.'"

The Master went into an ecstatic mood while watching the evening worship of Kali in the company of the devotees. He was in no condition even to salute the image. Very carefully he returned to his room with the devotees and sat down ; he was still in an ecstatic mood. He spoke to them while in that state.

In the room was Hari, a young man about twenty years of age, who was a relative of the Mukherjis and very much devoted to the Master. He was married. At that time he was living with the Mukherjis and looking for a job.

MASTER (to Hari, in an ecstatic mood) : "Take your initiation after getting your mother's permission. (To Priya, referring to Hari) I couldn't give him the mantra though I said I would initiate him. I don't initiate people. Continue with your own meditation and japa as you have been doing."

PRIYA : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "And I am saying this to you in this state of my mind. Believe my words. You see, there is no show or deceit here. I just said to the Divine Mother in my ecstatic mood, 'O Mother, may those who come here [referring to himself] through sincere attraction obtain perfection !'"

Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi was seated on the verandah conversing with Ramlal, Hazra, and others. The Master called to him from his room. M. went out quickly and brought Mahendra in.

MASTER (to Mahendra) : "Sit down and listen to my words."

Mahendra was a little embarrassed. He sat down.

MASTER (to the devotees) : "God can be served in different ways. An ecstatic lover of God enjoys Him in different ways. Sometimes he says, 'O God, You are the lotus and I am the bee', and sometimes, 'You are the Ocean

<sup>3</sup> "Om. That alone is the Reality."

of Satchidananda and I am the fish.' Sometimes, again, the lover of God says, 'I am Your dancing-girl.' He dances and sings before Him. He thinks of himself sometimes as the friend of God and sometimes as His handmaid. He looks on God sometimes as a child, as did Yasoda, and sometimes as husband or sweetheart, as did the gopis.

"Sometimes Balarama looked on Krishna as a friend; sometimes he would think he was Krishna's umbrella or carpet. He served Krishna in all possible ways."

Was Sri Ramakrishna hinting at his own state of mind while thus describing the different attitudes of a lover of God?

Next he described Chaitanya's three spiritual moods.

MASTER: "Chaitanyadeva used to experience three moods. In the inmost mood he would be absorbed in samadhi, unconscious of the outer world. In the semi-conscious mood he would dance in ecstasy but could not talk. In the conscious mood he would sing the glories of God.

(To the devotees) "You are listening to my words. Try to assimilate them. When worldly people sit before a sadhu, for the time being they completely hide all worldly thoughts and ideas. But once away from the holy man they let them out again. You have seen a pigeon eating dried peas. You think he has digested them, but he keeps them in his crop. You can feel them there.

"At dusk put aside all duties and pray to God. One is reminded of Him by darkness. At the approach of darkness one thinks: 'I could see everything a moment ago. Who has brought about this change?' The Mussalmans put aside all activities and say their prayers at the appointed times."

MUKHERJI: "Revered sir, is it good to practise japa?"

MASTER: "Yes. One attains God through japa. By repeating the name of God secretly and in solitude one receives divine grace. Then comes His vision. Suppose there is a big piece of timber lying under water and fastened to the land with a chain; by proceeding along the chain, link by link, you will at last touch the timber.

"Higher than worship is japa, higher than japa is meditation, higher than meditation is bhava, and higher than bhava are mahabhava and prema. Chaitanyadeva had prema. When one attains prema one has the rope to tie God."

Hazra entered the room.

MASTER (to Hazra): "Love of God, when it is intense and spontaneous, is called raga-bhakti. Vaidhi-bhakti, formal devotion, depends on scriptural injunctions. It comes and it goes. But raga-bhakti is like a stone emblem of Siva that has sprung up out of the bowels of the earth. One cannot find its root; they say the root goes as far as Benares. Only an Incarnation of God and His companions attain raga-bhakti."

HAZRA: "Ah me!"

MASTER: "One day I was returning from the pine-grove, when I saw you telling your beads. I said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, what a small-minded fellow he is! He lives here and still he practises japa with a rosary! Whoever comes here [referring to himself] will have his spiritual consciousness

awakened all at once; he won't have to bother much about japa. Go to Calcutta and you will find thousands telling their beads—even the prostitutes.'

(To M.) "Please bring Naran here in a carriage. I am making the same request to Mukherji. I shall give Naran something to eat when he comes. There is great significance in feeding boys like him."

*Saturday, October 4, 1884*

It was the day of the first full moon after the Durga Puja. Sri Ramakrishna arrived at the Calcutta house of Nabin Sen, the elder brother of Keshab Chandra Sen. On the previous Thursday Keshab's mother had begged the Master to pay her a visit in Calcutta.

The Master seated himself in a room on the upper floor of the house. With him were Baburam, Kishori, and a few other devotees. Nandalal and Keshab's other nephews, Keshab's mother, and other relatives of his, waited on the Master. It had been arranged to have devotional music performed in the room. M. was sitting in a room downstairs, listening to the kirtan.

Sri Ramakrishna said to the Brahmo devotees: "The world is impermanent. One should constantly remember death." Then he sang:

Remember this, O mind! Nobody is your own;  
Vain is your wandering in this world.  
Trapped in the subtle snare of maya as you are,  
Do not forget the Mother's name. . . .

The Master said to the devotees: "Dive deep. What will you gain by merely floating on the surface? Renounce everything for a few days, retire into solitude, and call on God with all your soul."

The Master sang:

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love. . . .

At Sri Ramakrishna's request the Brahmo devotees sang:

Thou art my All in All, O Lord!—the Life of my life, the Essence  
of essence;  
In the three worlds I have none else but Thee to call my own.  
Thou art my peace, my joy, my hope; Thou my support, my  
wealth, my glory;  
Thou my wisdom and my strength. . . .

The Master sang again:

O Mother, for Yasoda Thou wouldst dance, when she called Thee  
her precious "Blue Jewel":  
Where hast Thou hidden that lovely form, O terrible Syama? . . .

The Brahmo devotees also sang to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums:

O Mother, how deep is Thy love for men!  
Mindful of it, I weep for joy.  
Almost from the day of my birth  
I have transgressed Thine every law,



And still Thou lookest on me with love,  
 Comforting me with sweetest words.  
 Mindful of it, I weep for joy.  
 O Mother, the burden of Thy love  
 Is far too great for me to bear ;  
 My soul gives a heart-piercing cry  
 At Thy love's touch. To Thee I come,  
 Seeking a refuge at Thy feet.

They again sang of the Divine Mother :

O Mother, Thou my Inner Guide, ever awake within my heart !  
 Day and night Thou holdest me in Thy lap.  
 Why dost Thou show such tenderness to this unworthy child of  
 Thine ?

Ah ! It seems Thou art mad with love : now caressing, now with  
 strong grasp

Holding me firm, Thou givest me to drink  
 Thy nectar, pouring in my ears Thy words of loving tenderness.

Unceasing is Thy love for me, a love that cannot see my faults ;  
 Whenever I am in danger, Thou dost save me.  
 Saviour of sinners ! I know the truth : I am my Mother's and She  
 is mine.

Now I shall listen to Her alone, and follow the path of righteous-  
 ness ;

Drinking the milk that flows from my Mother's breasts,  
 I shall be strong and sing with joy : "Hail, O Mother ! Brahman  
 Eternal !"

The Master and the Brahmo devotees sang several songs about Hari  
 and Gauranga.

*Sunday, October 5, 1884*

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room after the midday meal, with M.,  
 Hazra, the elder Kali, Baburam, Ramlal, Hari, and others. Some of them sat  
 on the floor and some stood about. On the previous day the Master had visited  
 Keshab's mother at her Calcutta house and had made her happy with his  
 devotional songs.

Hazra had been living with the Master at Dakshineswar a long time. He  
 was a little conceited about his knowledge and even criticized the Master now  
 and then before others. Again, he would sit on the verandah of the Master's  
 room and tell his beads with apparent concentration. He spoke slightly of  
 Chaitanya as a "modern Incarnation". He would say : "God gives not only  
 pure devotion but also wealth. He has no lack of it. By attaining God one  
 obtains the eight occult powers as well." Hazra had a small debt to clear up,  
 about one thousand rupees. He had incurred it for the building of his house  
 and was worried about paying it.

The elder Kali had a position in an office, from which he received a  
 small salary. He had a large family to maintain. He was devoted to the  
 Master and visited him now and then, even absenting himself from the office.

KALI (*to Hazra*): "You go about criticizing people; you are like a touchstone, testing what is pure gold and what is impure. Why do you speak so much ill of others?"

HAZRA: "Whatever I say, I say to him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] alone."

MASTER: "That is so."

Hazra began to explain Tattvajnana.

HAZRA: "The meaning of Tattvajnana is the knowledge of the existence of the twenty-four tattvas, or cosmic principles."

He was wrong about the meaning of the word.

A DEVOTEE: "What are they?"

HAZRA: "The five elements, the six passions, the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, and so forth."

M. (*to the Master, smiling*): "He says that the six passions are included in the twenty-four cosmic principles."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Listen to him! Notice how he explains Tattvajnana! The word really means 'knowledge of Self'. The word 'Tat' means the Supreme Self, and the word 'tvam,' the embodied soul. One attains Supreme Knowledge, Tattvajnana, by realizing the identity of the embodied soul and the Supreme Self."

After a few minutes Hazra left the room and sat on the porch.

MASTER (*to M. and the others*): "He [meaning Hazra] only argues. This moment perhaps he understands, but the next moment he is his old self again."

"When the angler hooks a big fish and finds it pulling hard, he releases the line; otherwise it will snap and the angler himself will be thrown into the water. Therefore I do not say much to him."

(*To M.*) "Hazra said that a man could not be liberated unless he was born in a brahmin body. 'How is that?' I said. 'One attains liberation through bhakti alone. Sabari was the daughter of a hunter. She, Ruhidas, and others belonged to the sudra caste. They were liberated through bhakti alone.' 'But still—' Hazra insisted."

"He recognized Dhruva's spiritual greatness, but not as much as he recognized Prahlada's. When Latu said, 'Dhruva had great yearning for God from his boyhood', he kept still."

"I said that there was nothing greater than the bhakti that sought no end and had no selfish motive. Hazra contradicted me. I said to him, 'A wealthy man is annoyed when a petitioner comes to him. "There he comes", he says angrily. "Sit down", he says to him in an indifferent voice, and shows that he is much annoyed. He doesn't allow such a beggar to ride with him in his carriage.'

"But Hazra said that God was not like such wealthy people of the world; did He lack wealth, that He should feel pinched to give it away? Hazra said further: 'When rain falls from the sky, the Ganges and all the big rivers and lakes overflow with water. Small tanks, too, are filled. Likewise, God out of His grace grants wealth and riches as well as knowledge and devotion.'

(To the devotees) "But I call this impure devotion to God. Pure devotion has no desire behind it. You don't want anything from me, but you love to see me and hear my words. My mind also dwells on you. I wonder how you are and why you don't come."

"You don't want anything of God but still you love Him. That is pure bhakti, love of God with no motive behind it. Prahlada had it. He sought neither kingdom nor riches; he sought Hari alone."

M: "Hazra is a chatterbox. He won't achieve anything unless he becomes silent."

MASTER: "Now and then he comes to me and becomes mellowed. But he is a pest; again he argues. It is very hard to get rid of egotism. You may cut down an aswattha tree, but the next day a sprout will spring up. As long as the roots remain, the tree will grow again."

"I said to Hazra, 'Don't speak ill of anyone.' It is Narayana Himself who has assumed all these forms. One can worship even a wicked person. Haven't you observed the Kumari Puja? Why should you worship a girl who has all the physical limitations of a human being? It is because she is a form of the Divine Mother. But God dwells in a special way in His devotee. The devotee is His parlour. If the gourd has a large body then it makes a good tanpura. It gives a nice sound."

Two monks had arrived at the temple garden in the morning. They were devoted to the study of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Vedanta, and other scriptures. They entered the Master's room, saluted him, and sat on the mat on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the small couch. The Master spoke to the sadhus in Hindusthani.

MASTER: "Have you had your meal?"

SADHU: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "What did you eat?"

SADHU: "Dal and bread. Will you take some?"

MASTER: "No, I take only a few morsels of rice. Well, your japa and meditation must be without any desire for results. Isn't that so?"

SADHU: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "That is good. One must surrender the result to God. What do you say? That is the view of the *Gita*."

One sadhu said to the other, quoting from the *Gita*: "O Arjuna, whatever action you perform, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, and whatever austerities you practise, offer everything to Me."

MASTER: "If you give God something, you receive it back a thousand times over. That is why after doing meritorious deeds one offers a handful of water to God. It is the symbol of offering the fruit to God. When Yudhisthira was about to offer all his sins to Krishna, Bhima warned him: 'Never do such a thing. Whatever you offer to Krishna you will receive back a thousandfold.'

(To one of the sadhus) "Well, sir, one should be desireless; one should renounce all desires. Isn't that so?"

SADHU : " Yes, sir."

MASTER : " But I have the desire for bhakti. That is not bad. Rather, it is good. Sweets are bad, for they produce acidity. But sugar candy is an exception. Isn't that so ?"

SADHU : " Yes, sir."

MASTER : " Well, sir, what do you think of the Vedanta ?"

SADHU : " It includes all the six systems of philosophy."

MASTER : " But the essence of Vedanta is : ' Brahman alone is real, and the world illusory ; I have no separate existence ; I am that Brahman alone.' Isn't that so ?"

SADHU : " That is true, sir."

MASTER : " But for those who lead a householder's life, and those who identify themselves with the body, this attitude of ' I am He ' is not good. It is not good for householders to read Vedanta or the *Yogavasishtha*. It is very harmful for them to read these books. Householders should look on God as their Master and on themselves as His servants. They should think, ' O God, You are the Master and the Lord, and I am Your servant.' People who identify themselves with the body should not have the attitude of ' I am He '."

The devotees in the room remained silent. Sri Ramakrishna was smiling a little, a picture of self-contentment. He appeared happy in his own Self.

One of the sadhus whispered in the other's ear : " Look ! This is the state of the paramahansa."

MASTER (to M.) : " I feel like laughing."

Sri Ramakrishna smiled like a child. The monks left the room. The devotees were moving about in the room and on the porch.

MASTER (to M.) : " Did you go to Nabin Sen's house ?"

M : " Yes, sir. I listened to the songs from downstairs."

MASTER : " That was well done. Your wife was there. She is a cousin of Keshab Sen, isn't she ?"

M : " A distant cousin."

Sri Ramakrishna strolled up and down with M. No one else was with them.

MASTER : " A man visits his father-in-law's house. I, too, often used to think that I should marry, go to my father-in-law's house, and have great fun. But see what has come of it !"

M : " Sir, you say, ' If the boy holds his father's hand, he may slip ; but he doesn't if the father holds his hand.' That is exactly your condition. The Mother has taken hold of your hand."

MASTER : " I met Bamandas at the Viswases' house. I said to him, ' I have come to see you.' As I was leaving the place I heard him say : ' Goodness gracious ! The Divine Mother has caught hold of him, like a tiger seizing a man.' At that time I was a young man, very stout, and always in ecstasy.

" I am very much afraid of women. When I look at one I feel as if a tigress were coming to devour me. Besides, I find that their bodies, their limbs, and even their pores are very large. This makes me look upon them as she-monsters. I used to be much more afraid of women than I am at



present. I wouldn't allow one to come near me. Now I persuade my mind in various ways to look upon women as forms of the Blissful Mother.

"A woman is, no doubt, a part of the Divine Mother. But as far as a man is concerned, especially a sannyasi or a devotee of God, she is to be shunned. I don't allow a woman to sit near me very long, no matter how great her devotion may be. After a little while I say to her, 'Go and see the temples.' If that doesn't make her move, I myself leave the room on the pretext of smoking.

"I find that some men are not at all interested in women. Niranjan says, 'A woman never enters my thought.' I asked Hari<sup>1</sup> about it. He too says that his mind does not dwell on woman.

"Woman monopolizes three quarters of the mind, which should be given to God. And then, after the birth of a child, almost the whole mind is frittered away on the family. Then what is left to give to God?

"Again, there are some men who shed their last drop of blood, as it were, to keep their wives out of mischief. There is the gate-keeper, an old man, whose wife is only fourteen years old. She had to live with him. They lived in a thatched hut with walls made of dry leaves. People made holes in the wall to peep in. Now she has left him and run away.

"I know another man. He doesn't know where to keep his wife. There was some trouble at home, and now he is greatly worried. Let's not talk about these things any more.

"If a man lives with a woman, he cannot help coming under her control. Worldly men get up and sit down at the bidding of women. They all speak highly of their wives.

"Once I wanted to go to a certain place. I asked Ramlal's aunt<sup>2</sup> about it. She forbade me to go; so I could not. A little while later I said to myself: 'I am not a householder. I have renounced "woman and gold". If, in spite of that, this is my plight, one can well imagine how much worldly people are controlled by their wives.'"

M: "One who lives in the midst of 'woman and gold' can't help being stained by it, even if only slightly. You told us about Jaynarayan. He was such a great scholar. When you visited him he was an old man. You found him warming pillows and blankets in the sun."

MASTER: "But he had no vanity of scholarship. Further, what he said about the last days of his life came to pass. He spent them in Benares, following the injunctions of the scriptures. I saw his children. They were wearing high boots and had been educated in English schools."

By means of questions and answers Sri Ramakrishna now explained to M. his own exalted state.

MASTER: "At first I went stark mad. Why am I less so now? But I get into that state now and then."

M: "You don't have just one mood. As you said, you experience various moods. Sometimes you are like a child, sometimes like a madman,

<sup>1</sup> Later Swami Turiyananda.

<sup>2</sup> His own wife.

sometimes like an inert thing, and sometimes like a ghoul. And now and then you are a natural person."

MASTER: "Yes, like a child. But I also experience the moods of a boy and a young man. When I give instruction I feel like a young man. Then there is my boyishness: like a boy twelve or thirteen years old, I want to be frivolous. That is why I joke and make merry with the youngsters."

"What do you think of Naran?"

M: "He has good traits, sir."

MASTER: "Yes, the shell of the gourd is good. The tanpura made out of it will give good music. He says to me, 'You are everything.' Everyone speaks of me according to his comprehension. Some say that I am simply a sadhu, a devotee of God."

"If I forbid Naran to do something, he understands it very well. The other day I asked him to pull up the curtain, but he didn't do it. I had forbidden him to tie a knot, to sew his clothes, to lock a box, to pull up a curtain, and similar things. He understood it all. He who would renounce the world must practise all these disciplines. They are meant for sannyasis."

"While practising sadhana a man should regard a woman as a raging forest fire or a black cobra. But in the state of perfection, after the realization of God, she appears as the Blissful Mother. Then you will look on her as a form of the Divine Mother."

A few days earlier Sri Ramakrishna had spoken many words of warning to Narayan about women. He had said: "Don't let yourself touch the air near a woman's body. Cover yourself with a heavy sheet lest the air should touch your body. And keep yourself eight cubits, two cubits, or at least one cubit away from all women except your mother."

MASTER (to M.): "Naran's mother said to him about me, 'Even we are enchanted by the sight of him, not to speak of you, a mere child.' None but the guileless can realize God. How guileless Niranjan is!"

M: "True, sir."

MASTER: "Didn't you notice him that day in the carriage on the way to Calcutta? He is always the same—without guile. A man shows one side of his nature inside his house and another to the outside world. Since his father's death Narendra has been worried about his worldly affairs. He has a slightly calculating mind. How I wish that other youngsters were like Niranjan and Narendra!"

"Today I went to the village to see Nilkantha's theatrical performance. It was given at Nabin Niyogi's house. The children there are very bad; they have nothing to do but find fault. In such a place a person's spiritual feeling is restrained. During a performance the other day I saw Doctor Madhu shedding tears. I looked at him alone."

(To M.) "Can you tell me why people feel so much attracted to this place [meaning himself]? What does it mean?"

M: "It reminds me of an episode in Krishna's life at Vrindavan. Krishna transformed Himself into the cowherd boys and the calves, whereupon the cows began to feel more strongly attracted to the cowherd boys, the gopis, and the calves."

MASTER : "That is the attraction of God. The truth is, the Divine Mother creates the spell and it is that which attracts people.

"Well, not as many people come here as used to go to Keshab Sen. And how many people respect and honour Keshab ! He is known even in England. Queen Victoria spoke with him. It is said in the *Gita* that God's power is manifest in him who is honoured and respected by many. But so many people do not come here."

M : "It was the householders who went to Keshab Sen."

MASTER : "Yes, that is true. The worldly-minded."

M : "Will what Keshab has founded remain a long time ?"

MASTER : "Why, he has written a *samhita*, a book of rules for the guidance of the members of his Brahmo Samaj."

M : "But it is quite different with the work done by a Divine Incarnation Himself—Chaitanya's work, for instance."

MASTER : "Yes, yes. That is true."

M : "You yourself tell us that Chaitanyadeva said, 'The seeds I have sown will certainly bear fruit some time or other.' A man left some seeds on the cornice of a house. Later on the house fell down and trees grew from those seeds."

MASTER : "Many people go to the Samaj founded by Shivanath and his friends. Isn't that so ?"

M : "Yes, sir. People of that sort."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Yes, yes. The worldly-minded go there, but not many of those who long for God and are trying to renounce 'woman and gold'."

M : "It will be fine if a current flows from this place. Everything will be carried away by its force. Nothing that comes out of this place will be monotonous."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "I keep men's own ideals intact. I ask a Vaishnava to hold to his Vaishnava attitude and a Sakta to his. But this also I say to them : 'Never feel that your path alone is right and that the paths of others are wrong and full of errors.' Hindus, Mussalmans, and Christians are going to the same destination by different paths. A man can realize God by following his own path if his prayer is sincere.

"Vijay's mother-in-law said to me, 'Why don't you tell Balaram that it is unnecessary to worship God with form ; that it will be enough if he prays to the formless Satchidananda ?' I replied, 'Why should I say such a thing, and why should he listen to me even if I should say it ?'"

M : "That is true, sir. There are different paths to suit time, place, and the fitness of the candidate. Whatever path a man may follow, he will ultimately reach God if he is pure of heart and has sincere longing. That is what you say."

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room. Hari, the relative of the Mukherjis, M., and other devotees were on the floor. An unknown person saluted the Master and took a seat. The Master remarked later that his eyes were not good. They were yellow, like a cat's.

Hari prepared a smoke for Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER (*to Hari*) : " Let me see the palm of your hand. This mark is a good sign. Relax your hand."

He took Hari's hand into his as if to feel its weight.

MASTER : " He is still childlike. As yet there is no blemish in him. (*To the devotees*) From the hand I can tell whether a person is deceitful or guileless. (*To Hari*) Why, you should go to your father-in-law's house. You should talk to your wife and have a little fun with her if you like. (*To M.*) What do you say ?" (*M. and the others laugh.*)

M : " If a new pot becomes bad, one can no longer keep milk in it."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " How do you know that it is not already bad ?"

The two Mukherjis, Mahendra and Priyanath, were brothers. They did not work in an office, but had their own flour-mill. Priyanath had been an engineer. Sri Ramakrishna talked to Hari about the Mukherji brothers.

MASTER : " The elder brother is nice, isn't he ? He is artless."

HARI : " Yes, sir."

MASTER : " Isn't the younger brother very miserly ? I understand that since coming here he has improved a great deal. He once said to me, ' I didn't know anything before.' (*To Hari*) Do they give anything in charity ?"

HARI : " Not much, as far as I can see. Their elder brother, now dead, was a very good man. He was very charitable."

MASTER (*to M. and the others*) : " Whether a person will make spiritual progress or not can be known to a great extent by his physical marks. The hand of a deceitful person is heavy. A snub nose is not a good sign. Sambhu had that kind of nose ; hence he was not quite sincere in spite of all his wisdom. Pigeon-breast is not a good sign either. Hard bones and heavy elbow-joints are bad signs too ; and yellow eyes, like a cat's.

" A man becomes very mean if he has lips that are thick, like a dome's.<sup>6</sup> A brahmin was here for a few months acting as priest of the Vishnu temple. I couldn't eat the food he touched. One day I suddenly exclaimed, ' He is a dome !' Afterwards he said to me : ' Yes, sir. We live in the dome quarters. I know how to make wicker baskets and such things, just like a dome.'

" There are other bad physical signs : one eye and squint eyes. It is rather better to have one eye, but never squint eyes. Squint-eyed people are wicked and deceitful.

" A student of Mahesh Nyayaratna's came here. He described himself as an atheist. He said to Hriday : ' I am an atheist. You may take up the position of a believer in God and argue with me.' Thereupon I watched him closely and noticed that his eyes were yellow, like a cat's.

" Whether a person is good or bad can also be known from the way he walks."

Sri Ramakrishna paced the verandah. M. and Baburam walked with him.

MASTER (*to Hazra*) : " A man came here. I saw that his eyes were like a cat's. He asked me : ' Do you know astrology ? I am in some difficulty.' I said : ' No, I don't. Go to Baranagore. There you will find astrologers.' "

<sup>6</sup> One of the lowest castes among the Hindus.



Baburam and M. talked about Nilkantha's theatrical performance. Baburam had spent the previous night at the temple garden after his return from Nabin Sen's house. In the morning he had attended Nilkantha's performance with the Master.

MASTER (*to M. and Baburam*) : "What are you talking about?"

M. AND BABURAM : "About Nilkantha's performance."

While pacing the verandah Sri Ramakrishna suddenly took M. aside and said, "The less people know about your thoughts of God, the better for you." Saying these words the Master abruptly went away. A short time afterwards he began to talk with Hazra.

HAZRA : "Nilkantha told you he would pay you a visit. It would be good to send for him."

MASTER : "No, he didn't sleep at all last night. It will be different if he comes here through the will of God."

Sri Ramakrishna asked Baburam to visit Narayan at his house. He looked on Narayan as God Himself, and so he longed to see him. The Master said to Baburam, "You may go to him with one of your English text-books."

About three o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room. Nilkantha arrived with five or six of his companions. The Master went toward the east door as if to welcome him. The musicians bowed before the Master, touching the ground with their foreheads.

Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. Baburam stood behind him. M., Nilkantha, and the musicians were in front of him, watching him in great amazement. Dinanath, an officer of the temple, looked on from the north side of the bed. Soon the room was filled with officers of the temple garden. Sri Ramakrishna's ecstasy abated a little. He seated himself on a mat on the floor, surrounded by Nilkantha and other devotees.

MASTER (*still in an ecstatic mood*) : "I am all right."

NILKANTHA (*with folded hands*) : "Make me all right too."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Why, you are already all right. Adding the letter 'â' to 'ka', one gets 'kâ'. By adding another 'â' to 'kâ' one still gets the same 'kâ'." (*All laugh.*)

NILKANTHA : "Revered sir, I am entangled in worldliness."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "God has kept you in the world for the sake of others. There are eight fetters. One cannot get rid of them all. God keeps one or two so that a man may live in the world and teach others. You have organized this theatrical company. How many people are being benefited by seeing your bhakti! If you give up everything, then where will these musicians go?"

"God is now doing all these works through you. When they are finished, you will not return to them. The housewife finishes her household duties, feeds everyone, including the menservants and maidservants, and then goes to take her bath. She doesn't come back then even if people shout for her."

NILKANTHA : "Please bless me."

MASTER : "Yasoda went mad with grief because she was separated from Krishna. She went to Radhika, who was meditating. Radhika said to her in

an ecstatic state : 'I am the Ultimate Prakriti, the Primal Power. Ask a boon of me.' Yasoda said to her : 'What shall I ask of You ? Please bless me, that with all my body, mind, and speech I may think of God and serve Him ; that with my ears I may hear the singing of God's name and glories ; that with my hands I may serve Hari and His devotees ; that with my eyes I may behold His form and His devotees.'

"Your eyes fill with tears when you utter the name of God. Why then should you worry about anything ? Divine love has grown in you.

"To know many things is ajnana, ignorance. To know only one thing is jnana, Knowledge—the realization that God alone is real and that He dwells in all. And to talk to Him is vijnana, a fuller Knowledge. To love God in different ways, after realizing Him, is vijnana.

"It is also said that God is beyond one and two. He is beyond speech and mind. To go up from the Lila to the Nitya and come down again from the Nitya to the Lila is mature bhakti.

"I love that song of yours about aspiring to reach the Lotus Feet of the Divine Mother. It is enough to know that everything depends on the grace of God. But one must pray to God ; it will not do to remain inactive. The lawyer gives all the arguments and finishes his pleading by saying to the judge :

'I have said all I have to say. Now the decision rests with Your Honour.'

After a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna said to Nilkantha : "You sang so much in the morning, and now you have taken the trouble to come here. But here everything is 'honorary'."

NILKANTHA : "Why so ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "I know what you will say."

NILKANTHA : "I shall get a precious gem from here."

MASTER : "You already have that precious gem. What will you gain by adding again the letter 'â' to 'kâ' ? If you didn't have the gem, should I like your songs so much ? Ramprasad had attained divine realization ; that is why his songs appeal so much.

"I had already planned to hear your music. Later on Niyogi, too, came here to invite me."

The Master was sitting on the small couch. He told Nilkantha that he would like to hear a song or two about the Divine Mother.

Nilkantha sang two songs with his companions. When the Master heard the second song he stood up and went into samadhi. Presently he began to dance in an ecstasy of divine love. Nilkantha and the devotees sang and danced around him. Then Nilkantha sang a song about Siva, and the Master danced with the devotees.

When the singing was over, Sri Ramakrishna said to Nilkantha, "I should like to hear that song of yours I heard in Calcutta."

M : "About Sri Gauranga ?"

MASTER : "Yes, yes !"

Nilkantha sang the song, "The beautiful Gauranga, the youthful dancer, fair as molten gold".



Sri Ramakrishna sang again and again the line, "Everything is swept away by the onrush of love", and danced with Nilkantha and the other devotees. Those who saw that indescribable dancing were never to forget it. The room was filled with people, all intoxicated with divine joy. It seemed as if Chaitanya himself were dancing with his companions.

Manomohan was in an ecstatic mood. He was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and a brother-in-law of Rakhal. Several ladies of his family had come with him. They were witnessing this divine music and dancing from the north verandah.

Sri Ramakrishna sang again, this time about Gauranga and Nityananda :

Behold, the two brothers have come, who weep while chanting  
Hari's name. . . .

He danced with Nilkantha and the other devotees, improvising the line :

Behold, the two brothers have come, they who are mad with love of  
Radha.

Hearing the loud music, many people gathered about the room. The verandahs to the south and north, and the semicircular porch to the west of the room, were crowded with people. Even passengers in the boats going along the Ganges were attracted by the kirtan.

The music was over. Sri Ramakrishna bowed to the Divine Mother and said, "Bhagavata—Bhakta—Bhagavan. My salutations to the jnanis, my salutations to the yogis, my salutations to the bhaktas."

The Master was seated on the semicircular porch with Nilkantha and the other devotees. The autumn moon flooded all the quarters with light. Sri Ramakrishna and Nilkantha talked.

NILKANTHA : "You are none other than Gauranga."

MASTER : "Why should you say such a thing ? I am the servant of the servant of all. The waves belong to the Ganges ; but does the Ganges belong to the waves ?"

NILKANTHA : "You may say whatever you like, but we regard you as Gauranga himself."

MASTER (*tenderly, in an ecstatic mood*) : "My dear sir, I try to seek my 'I', but I do not find it. Hanuman said : 'O Rama, sometimes I think that You are the whole and I am a part, and sometimes that You are the Master and I am Your servant. But when I have the Knowledge of Reality, I see that You are I and I am You.'"

NILKANTHA : "What shall I say, sir ? Please be gracious to us."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "You are ferrying many people across the ocean of the world. How many hearts are illumined by hearing your music !"

NILKANTHA : "You talk of ferrying. But bless me that I may not be drowned in the ocean myself."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "If you get drowned, it will be in the Sea of Immortality."

Sri Ramakrishna was delighted with Nilkantha's company. He said to the musician : "For you to have come here ! You whom people see as a result of many austerities and prayers ! Listen to a song."

The Master sang a song, two lines of which ran :

When the Blissful Mother comes to my house, how much of the  
*Chandi* I shall hear !

How many monks will come here, and how many yogis with matted  
locks !

He said, continuing, " As long as the Divine Mother has come here,  
many yogis with matted locks will come too."

Sri Ramakrishna laughed. To M., Baburam, and the other devotees he  
said : " I feel very much like laughing. Just fancy, I am singing for these  
musicians !"

NILKANTHA : " We go about singing ; but today we have had our true  
reward."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " When a shopkeeper sells an article, he sometimes  
gives a little extra something to the buyer. You sang at Nabin's house and  
have given the extra something here."

All laughed.



## XXXI

### ADVICE TO ISHAN

*Saturday, October 11, 1884*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA lay on the small couch in his room at the Dakshineswar temple garden. It was about two in the afternoon. M. and Priya Mukherji were sitting on the floor. M. had left his school at one o'clock and had just arrived at Dakshineswar. The Master was telling anecdotes about the calculating nature of the wealthy Jadu Mallick.

MASTER : " Once I went to Jadu Mallick's house. He asked right away, ' How much is the carriage hire ? ' Someone told him it was three rupees and two annas. Then he questioned me about it. Next one of his people secretly asked the coachman, who said it was three rupees and four annas. (*All laugh.*) At that he ran to us and said, ' How much did you say the carriage hire was ? '

" A broker was present. He said to Jadu : ' There is a plot of land at Burrabazar for sale. Will you buy it ? ' Jadu asked the price and the broker told him. Jadu said, ' Won't he give it for less ? ' I said to Jadu : ' Come, come. You aren't going to buy the land. You're only bargaining. Isn't that so ? ' He turned to me and laughed.

" That is the nature of the worldly man. He wants people to come to him. That spreads his name in the market.

" Jadu went to Adhar's house. I told him it had made Adhar very happy. He said : ' What ? What ? Was he really happy ? ' A certain Mallick came to Jadu's house. He was very clever and deceitful. I saw it in his eyes. I looked at him and said : ' It isn't good to be clever. The crow is very clever, but it eats others' filth. ' I could tell he was badly off. Jadu's mother was amazed and said to me, ' How did you know he hadn't a penny ? ' I saw it from his appearance."

Narayan entered the room and sat on the floor.

MASTER (*to Priyanath*) : " Well, your Hari is a fine young man."

PRIYANATH : " What is so fine about him ? Of course, he has a childlike nature."

NARAYAN : " He addressed his wife as mother."

MASTER : " What ! Even I can't do that. And he calls her mother ! "  
(*To Priyanath*) You see, the boy is very quiet. His mind is directed to God."

Sri Ramakrishna changed the subject of conversation.

MASTER : " Do you know what Hem said ? He said to Baburam, ' God alone is real ; all else is illusory.' (*All laugh.*) Oh, no ! He said it sincerely. Again, he told me he would take me to his house and sing kirtan. But he didn't do it. I understand that he said later on, ' What will people say if I sing with drums and cymbals ? ' He was afraid that people might think he was crazy.

" Haripada has fallen into the clutches of a woman of the Ghoshpara sect. He can't get rid of her. He says that she takes him on her lap and feeds him. She claims that she looks on him as the Baby Krishna. I have warned him a great many times. She says that she thinks of him as a child. But this maternal affection soon degenerates into something dangerous.

" You see, you should keep far away from woman ; then you may realize God. It is extremely harmful to have much to do with women who have bad motives, or to eat food from their hands. They rob a man of his spirituality. Only by being extremely careful about woman can one preserve one's love of God. One day Bhavanath, Rakhal, and some other youngsters had cooked their own meal in the temple garden. They were sitting at their meal when a Baul arrived, sat down with them, and said he wanted to eat with them. I said that there was not enough food ; if anything was left it would be kept for him. He became angry and left. On the Vijaya day a man allows anyone and everyone to feed him with his own hand. It is not good. But one can eat food from the hand of a devotee who is pure in heart.

" You must be extremely careful about women. Women speak of the attitude of Gopala ! Pay no attention to such things. The proverb says : ' A woman devours the three worlds.' Many women, when they see handsome and healthy young men, lay snares for them. That is what they call the ' attitude of Gopala '.

" Those who develop dispassion from early youth, those who roam about yearning for God from boyhood, those who refuse all worldly life, belong to a different class. They belong to an unsullied aristocracy. If they develop true renunciation, they keep themselves at least fifty cubits away from women lest their spiritual mood should be destroyed. Once falling into the clutches of women, they no longer remain on the level of unsullied aristocracy. They fall from it and come to a lower level. People who practise renunciation from early youth belong to a very high level. Their ideal is very pure. They are stainless.

" How can a man conquer passion ? He should assume the attitude of a woman. I spent many days as the handmaid of God. I dressed myself in women's clothes, put on ornaments, and covered the upper part of my body with a scarf, just like a woman. With the scarf on I used to perform the evening worship before the image. Otherwise, how could I have kept my wife with me for eight months ? Both of us behaved as if we were the hand-maids of the Divine Mother. I cannot speak of myself as a man. One day I was in an ecstatic mood. My wife asked me, ' How do you regard me ? ' ' As the Blissful Mother ', I said.

" Do you know the significance of the Siva emblem ? It is the worship of the symbols of fatherhood and motherhood. The devotee worshipping the

image prays, 'O Lord, please grant that I may not be born into this world again; that I may not have to pass again through a mother's womb.'"

A tutor of the Tagores entered the room with some boys of the family. Sri Ramakrishna continued talking.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "Sri Krishna has a peacock feather on His crest. The feather bears the sign of the female sex. The significance of this is that Krishna carries Prakriti, the female principle, on His head. When Krishna joined the circle of the gopis to dance with them, He appeared there as a woman. That is why you see Him wearing women's apparel in the company of the gopis. Unless a man assumes the nature of a woman, he is not entitled to her company. Assuming the attitude of a woman, he can sport with her and enjoy her company. But a man must be extremely careful during the early stages of spiritual discipline. Then he must live far away from any woman. He must not go too close to one even if she is a great devotee of God. You see, a man must not sway his body while climbing to the roof; he may fall. Weak people should hold on to a support while going up the stairs.

"But it is quite different when one reaches perfection. After the realization of God there is not much for a man to fear; he has become to a great extent secure. The important thing is for a man somehow to climb to the roof. After that he can even dance there. But he cannot dance on the steps. Again, after climbing to the roof, you need no longer discard what you discarded before. You find that the stairs are made of the same materials—bricks, lime, and brick-dust—as the roof. The woman you have to be so careful about at the beginning will appear to you, after the realization of God, as the Divine Mother Herself. Then you will worship her as the Divine Mother. You won't fear her so much.

"The thing is to touch the 'granny', as children do in the game of hide-and-seek. Then you can do whatever you like.

"Man, looking outward, sees the gross; at that time his mind dwells in the annamayakosha, the gross body. Next is the subtle body. Functioning through the subtle body, the mind dwells in the manomayakosha and the vijñanamayakosha. Next is the causal body. Functioning through the causal body the mind enjoys bliss; it dwells in the anandamayakosha. This corresponds to the semi-conscious state experienced by Chaitanya. Last of all, the mind loses itself in the Great Cause. It disappears. It merges in the Great Cause. What one experiences after that cannot be described in words. In his inmost state of consciousness, Chaitanya enjoyed this experience. Do you know what this state is like? Dayananda described it by saying, 'Come into the inner apartments and shut the door.' Anyone and everyone cannot enter that part of the house,

"I used to meditate on the flame of a light. I thought of the red part as gross, the white part inside the red as subtle, and the stick-like black part, which is the innermost of all, as the causal.

"By certain signs you can tell when meditation is being rightly practised. One of them is that a bird will sit on your head, thinking you are an inert thing.

"I first met Keshab at a meeting of the Adi Samaj. Several members of the Samaj were sitting on the platform. Keshab was in the middle. I saw him motionless as a log. Pointing to Keshab, I said to Mathur Babu: 'Look there! That bait has been swallowed by a fish.' Because of that power of meditation he achieved what he wanted—name, fame, and so forth—through the grace of God.

"One can meditate even with eyes open. One can meditate even while talking. Take the case of a man with toothache—"

TUTOR OF THE TAGORES: "Yes, sir. I know that very well." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*): "Yes, even when his teeth ache he does all his duties, but his mind is on the pain. Likewise one can meditate with eyes open and while talking to others as well."

TUTOR: "One of the epithets of God is 'Redeemer of the sinner'. That is our hope. God is compassionate."

MASTER: "The Sikhs, too, said that God was compassionate. I asked, 'How is He compassionate?' 'Why,' they answered, 'He has begotten us; He has created so many things for us; He has brought us up to be men; and He protects us from danger at every step.' Thereupon I said: 'After begetting us, God looks after us and feeds us. Is there much credit in that? Suppose a son is born to you. Do you expect a man from another part of the city to bring him up?'"

TUTOR: "Revered sir, one man quickly succeeds in spiritual life, and another doesn't succeed at all. How do you explain that?"

MASTER: "The truth is that a man succeeds to a great extent because of tendencies inherited from his previous births. People think he has attained the goal all of a sudden. A man drank a glass of wine in the morning. It made him completely drunk. He began to behave improperly. People were amazed to see that he could be so drunk after one glass. But another man said, 'Why, he has been drinking all night.'

"Hanuman burnt down the golden city of Lanka. People were amazed that a mere monkey could burn the whole city. But then they said, 'The truth is that the city was burnt by the sighs of Sita and the wrath of Rama.'

"Look at Lala Babu.' He had so much wealth. Could he have renounced it all so suddenly without the good tendencies of his previous births? And Rani Bhavani. So much knowledge and devotion in a woman!

"In his last birth a man is endowed with sattva. His mind is directed to God. He longs for God. He withdraws his mind from worldly things.

"Krishnadas Pal came here. I found him full of rajas. But it must be said that he observed the Hindu customs. He left his shoes outside before entering the room. After a little conversation I discovered that he had no stuff inside. I asked him about man's duty. He said, 'To do good to the world.' I said: 'My dear sir, who are you? What good will you do to the world? Is the world such a small thing that you think you can help it?'"

<sup>1</sup> A well-known landholder of Bengal who renounced the world at an early age and lived at Mathura as a Vaishnava monk.



Narayan arrived. Sri Ramakrishna was very happy to see him. He seated Narayan by his side on the small couch. He showed him his love by stroking his body and giving him sweets to eat. Then he asked Narayan tenderly, "Will you have some water?" Narayan was a student at M.'s school. At home his people beat him for visiting Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to Narayan with an affectionate smile, "You had better get a leather jacket; then the beating won't hurt." Turning to Harish, the Master said that he would like to have a smoke.

Again addressing Narayan, Sri Ramakrishna said: "That woman who has established an artificial relationship of mother and son with Haripada came here the other day. I have warned Haripada very often. She belongs to the Ghoshpara sect. I asked her if she had found her 'man'. She said yes, and mentioned a man's name.

(To M.) "Ah! Nilkantha came here the other day. What spiritual fervour he has! He said he would come here another day and sing for us. They are dancing over there. Why don't you go and see it? (To Ramlal) There is no oil in the room. (*Looking at the oil-jar*) The servant hasn't filled it."

Sri Ramakrishna was walking up and down, now in his room, now on the south verandah. Occasionally pausing on the semicircular porch west of his room, he would look at the Ganges.

After a little while he returned to his room and sat on the small couch. It was past three in the afternoon. The devotees took their seats on the floor. The Master sat in silence before them, now and then casting a glance at the walls, where many pictures were hanging. To Sri Ramakrishna's left was a picture of Sarasvati, and beyond it, a picture of Gaur and Nitai singing kirtan with their devotees. In front of the Master hung pictures of Dhruva, Prahlada, and Mother Kali. On the wall to his right was another picture of the Divine Mother, Rajarajesvari. Behind him was a picture of Jesus Christ raising the drowning Peter. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna turned to M. and said: "You see, it is good to keep pictures of sannyasis and holy men in one's room. When you get up in the morning you should see the faces of holy persons rather than the faces of other men. People with rajasic qualities keep 'English' pictures on their walls—pictures of rich men, the King, the Queen, the Prince of Wales, and white men and women walking together. That shows their rajasic temperament.

"You acquire the nature of the people whose company you keep. Therefore even pictures may prove harmful. Again, a man seeks the company that agrees with his own nature. The paramahamsas keep near them a few young boys five or six years old. They allow such boys to be near them. Attaining the state of a paramahansa, a man loves the company of boys. Like the paramahamsas, the boys are not under the control of the gunas—sattva, rajas, or tamas.

"By looking at trees a man awakens in his heart the picture of a hermitage in which a rishi is practising austerity."

A brahmin from Sinthi entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. He had studied Vedanta in Benares. He was stout and had a smiling face.

MASTER: "Hello! How are you? You haven't been here in a long time."

PUNDIT (*smiling*): "Worldly duties, sir. You know I have very little leisure."

The pundit sat down, and the Master began to talk with him.

MASTER: "You spent a long time in Benares. Tell us what you saw there. Tell us something about Dayananda."

PUNDIT: "Yes, I met him. You also met him, didn't you?"

MASTER: "Yes, I visited him. He was living then in a garden house on the other side of the Ganges. Keshab was expected there that day. He longed for Keshab as the chatak bird longs for rain. He was a great scholar and made fun of the Bengali language. He admitted the existence of the deities, but Keshab did not. Dayananda used to say: 'God has created so many things. Couldn't He have created the deities?' Dayananda believed the Ultimate Reality to be without form. Captain was repeating the name of Rama. Dayananda said to him sarcastically, 'Better repeat "sandesh"!' "

PUNDIT: "In Benares the pundits had great discussions with Dayananda. Finally he was left alone with all the others against him. They made it so hot for him that he thought the only way to save himself was by running away. All the pundits shouted with one voice, 'Whatever Dayananda has said is to be despised!'

"I saw Colonel Olcott too. The Theosophists believe in the existence of mahatmas. They also speak of the 'lunar', 'solar', 'stellar', and other planes. A Theosophist can go in his 'astral body' to all these planes. Oh, Olcott said many such things. Well, sir, what do you think of Theosophy?"

MASTER: "The one essential thing is bhakti, loving devotion to God. Do the Theosophists seek bhakti? They are good if they do. If Theosophy makes the realization of God the goal of life, then it is good. One cannot seek God if one constantly busies oneself with the mahatmas and the lunar, solar, and stellar planes. A man should practise sadhana and pray to God with a longing heart for love of His Lotus Feet. He should direct his mind to God alone, withdrawing it from the various objects of the world."

The Master sang:

How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God?

You are groping like a madman locked in a dark room.

He is grasped though ecstatic love; how can you fathom Him without it? . . .

And, for that love, the mighty yogis practise yoga from age to age;  
When love awakes, the Lord, like a magnet, draws to Him the soul.

Continuing, the Master said: "You may speak of the scriptures, of philosophy, of Vedanta; but you will not find God in any of these." You will never succeed in realizing God unless your soul becomes restless for Him.

Only through affirmation, never negation, can you know Him,  
Neither through Veda nor through Tantra nor the six darsanas.  
It is in love's elixir only that He delights, O mind;  
He dwells in the body's inmost depths, in Everlasting Joy.

"One must be very earnest about God. Listen to another song :

Can everyone have the vision of Radha ? Can everyone taste her love ?  
This, the rarest treasure of all, no earthly wealth can buy ;  
Without devotions and sadhana none can ever obtain it.

The raindrop falling upon the deep when Svati shines on high  
Is formed within the oyster's shell into a priceless pearl.  
Can such a pearl be formed from rain that falls at other times ?

Mothers with their babes in arms may beckon to the moon  
To leave the sky and come to them ; but only the babes are fooled.  
Does the moon ever leave the sky and dwell upon the earth ?

"One must practise intense spiritual discipline. Can one obtain the vision of God all of a sudden, without any preparation ?

"A man asked me, 'Why don't I see God ?' I said to him, as the idea came to my mind : 'You want to catch a big fish. First make arrangements for it. Throw spiced bait into the water. Get a line and a rod. At the smell of the bait the fish will come from the deep water. By the movement of the water you will know that a big fish has come.'

"You want to eat butter. But what will you achieve by simply repeating that there is butter in milk ? You have to work hard for it. Only thus can you separate butter from milk. Can one see God by merely repeating, 'God exists' ? One needs sadhana.

"The Divine Mother Herself practised austere sadhana to set an example for mankind. Sri Krishna, who is none other than the Ultimate Brahman, also practised sadhana to set an example to others.

"Sri Krishna is the Purusha and Radha the Prakriti, the Chitsakti, the Adyasakti. Radha is the Prakriti, the embodiment of the three gunas. Sattva, rajas, and tamas are in her. As you remove the layers of an onion, you will first see tints of both black and red, then only red, and last of all only white. The Vaishnava scriptures speak of 'Kam-Radha', 'Prem-Radha', and 'Nitya-Radha'. Chandravali is Kam-Radha, and Srimati is Prem-Radha ; Nanda saw Nitya-Radha holding Gopala in Her arms.<sup>2</sup>

"The Brahman of Vedanta and the Chitsakti are identical, like water and its wetness. The moment you think of water you must also think of its wetness, and the moment you think of water's wetness you must also think of water. Or it is like the snake and its wriggling motion. The moment you think of the snake you must also think of its wriggling motion, and the moment you think of the snake's wriggling motion you must also think of the snake. When do I call the Ultimate Reality by the name of Brahman ? When it is actionless or unattached to action. When a man puts on a cloth he remains the same man as when he was naked. He was naked ; now he is clothed. He may be naked again. There is poison in the snake, but it doesn't harm the snake. It is poison to him who is bitten by the snake. Brahman itself is unattached.

<sup>2</sup> Kam-Radha, full of seductive power, is the first aspect of Radha ; Prem-Radha, full of ecstatic love, is her second aspect ; Nitya-Radha is her third aspect, as the eternal Primordial Power. Chandravali, one of the gopis, had a lustful attitude towards Sri Krishna. Srimati is another name of Radhika, the foremost of the gopis. Nanda was Sri Krishna's foster-father.

"Names and forms are nothing but the manifestations of the power of Prakriti. Sita said to Hanuman : 'My child, in one form I am Sita, in another form I am Rama. In one form I am Indra, in another I am Indrani. In one form I am Brahma, in another, Brahmani. In one form I am Rudra, in another, Rudrani.'<sup>3</sup> Whatever names and forms you see are nothing but the manifestations of the power of Chitsakti. Everything is the power of Chitsakti—even meditation and he who meditates. As long as I feel that I am meditating, I am within the jurisdiction of Prakriti. (*To M.*) Try to assimilate what I have said. One should hear what the Vedas and the Puranas say, and carry it out in life.

(*To the Pundit*) "It is good to live in the company of holy men now and then. The disease of worldliness has become chronic in man. It is mitigated, to a great extent, in holy company.

"'I' and 'mine'—that is ignorance. True knowledge makes one feel : 'O God, You alone do everything. You alone are my own. And to You alone belong houses, buildings, family, relatives, friends, the whole world. All is Yours.' But ignorance makes one feel : 'I am doing everything. I am the doer. House, buildings, family, children, friends, and property are all mine.'

"Once a teacher was explaining all this to a disciple. He said, 'God alone, and no one else, is your own.' The disciple said : 'But, revered sir, my mother, my wife, and my other relatives take very good care of me. They see nothing but darkness when I am not present. How much they love me !' The teacher said : 'There you are mistaken. I shall show you presently that nobody is your own. Take these few pills with you. When you go home, swallow them and lie down in bed. People will think you are dead, but you will remain conscious of the outside world and will see and hear everything. Then I shall visit your home.

"The disciple followed the instructions. He swallowed the pills and lay as if unconscious in his bed. His mother, wife, and other relatives began to cry. Just then the teacher came in, in the guise of a physician, and asked the cause of their grief. When they had told him everything, he said to them : 'Here is medicine for him. It will bring him back to life. But I must tell you one thing. This medicine must first be taken by one of his relatives and then given to him. But the relative who takes it first will die. I see his mother, his wife, and others here. Certainly one of you will volunteer to take the medicine. Then the young man will come back to life.'

"The disciple heard all this. First the physician called his mother, who was weeping and rolling on the ground in grief. He said to her : 'Mother, you don't need to weep any more. Take this medicine and your son will come to life. But you will die.' The mother took the medicine in her hand and began to think. After much reflection she said to the physician, with tears in her eyes : 'My child, I have a few more children. I have to think about them too. I am wondering what will happen to them if I die. Who

<sup>3</sup> Indrani, Brahmani, and Rudrani are the Consorts, or Powers, of Indra, Brahma, and Rudra.



will feed them and look after them ?' The physician next called the wife and handed the medicine to her. She had been weeping bitterly too. With the medicine in her hand she also began to reflect. She had heard that she would die from the effect of the medicine. At last, with tears in her eyes, she said : ' He has met his fate. If I die, what will happen to my young children ? Who will keep them alive ? How can I take the medicine ?' In the mean time the disciple had got over the effect of the pills. He was now convinced that nobody was really his own. He jumped out of bed and left the place with his teacher. The guru said to him, ' There is only one whom you may call your own, and that is God.'

" Therefore a man should act in such a way that he may have bhakti for the Lotus Feet of God and love God as his very own. You see this world around you. It exists for you only for a couple of days. There is nothing to it."

PUNDIT (*smiling*) : " Revered sir, I feel a spirit of total renunciation when I am here. I feel like going away, giving up the world."

MASTER : " No, no ! Why should you give up ? Give up mentally. Live unattached in the world."

" Surendra wanted to spend the night here occasionally. He brought a bed and even spent a day or two here. Then his wife said to him, ' You may go anywhere you like during the day-time, but at night you must not leave home.' What could poor Surendra do ? Now he has no way of spending the night away from home."

" What will you achieve by mere reasoning ? Be restless for God and learn to love Him. Reason, mere intellectual knowledge, is like a man who can go only as far as the outer court of the house. But bhakti is like a woman who goes into the inner court."

" One must take up a definite attitude toward God. Then alone can one realize Him. Rishis like Sanaka cherished the attitude of *santa* ; Hanuman the attitude of a servant ; the cowherd boys of Vrindavan, like Sridama and Sudama, the attitude of a friend ; Yasoda the attitude of a mother ; and Radha the attitude of a sweetheart."

" ' O God, Thou art the Lord and I am Thy servant '—that is the servant's attitude, a very good one for aspirants."

PUNDIT : " Yes, sir."

The pundit from Sinthi left. It was dusk. Twilight hung over the Panchavati, the temples, and the river. Evening worship began in the different temples, accompanied by the sound of bells, gongs, and conch-shells. Sri Ramakrishna bowed before the pictures of the deities in his room. He was sitting on the small couch in an abstracted mood. A few devotees were on the floor. There was silence in the room.

An hour passed. Ishan and Kishori entered and sat down on the floor after saluting Sri Ramakrishna. Ishan was a great ritualist. He was devoted to the performance of the various rites and ceremonies prescribed by the scriptures. The Master opened the conversation.

MASTER : " Can one attain knowledge of God by merely repeating the word ' God ' ? There are two indications of such knowledge. First, longing,

that is to say, love for God. You may indulge in reasoning or discussion, but if you feel no longing or love, it is all futile. Second, the awakening of the Kundalini. As long as the Kundalini remains asleep, you have not attained knowledge of God. You may be spending hours poring over books or discussing philosophy, but if you have no inner restlessness for God, you have no knowledge of Him.

"When the Kundalini is awakened, one attains bhava, bhakti, prema, and so on. This is the path of devotion.

"The path of karma<sup>4</sup> is very difficult. Through it one obtains some powers—I mean occult powers."

ISHAN : "Let me go and see Hazra."

Sri Ramakrishna sat in silence. After a while Ishan returned to the room accompanied by Hazra. The Master was still silent. A few moments later Hazra whispered to Ishan : "Let's leave him alone. Perhaps he will meditate now." Both left the room.

Sri Ramakrishna was still silent. In a few moments the devotees noticed that he was really meditating. Then he performed japa. He placed his right hand on his head, then on his forehead, then on his throat, then on his heart, and last of all on his navel. Was it meditation on the Primordial Energy in the six centres of the body ?

Ishan and Hazra had gone to the Kali temple. Sri Ramakrishna was absorbed in meditation. Meanwhile Adhar had arrived. It was about half past seven.

A little later the Master went to the Kali temple. He looked at the image, took some sacred flowers from the feet of the Mother, and placed them on his head. He prostrated himself before the Mother and went round the image. He waved the chamara. He appeared ecstatic with divine fervour. Coming out, he found Ishan performing the sandhya with the kosakusi.

MASTER (to Ishan) : "What ? You are still here ? Are you still performing the sandhya ? Listen to a song.

Why should I go to Ganga or Gaya, to Kasi, Kanchi, or Prabhas,  
So long as I can breathe my last with Kali's name upon my lips ?  
What need of rituals has a man, what need of devotions any more,  
If he repeats the Mother's name at the three holy hours ?  
Rituals may pursue him close, but never can they overtake him.  
Charity, vows, and giving of gifts do not appeal to Madan's mind ;  
The Blissful Mother's Lotus Feet are his whole prayer and  
sacrifice. . . .

"How long must a man continue the sandhya ? As long as he has not developed love for the Lotus Feet of God, as long as he does not shed tears and his hair does not stand on end when he repeats God's name.

I bow my head, says Prasad, before desire and liberation ;  
Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman,  
I have discarded, once for all, both dharma and adharma.

<sup>4</sup> Here signifying religious rites and rituals.

"When the fruit grows, the flower drops off. When one has developed love of God and has beheld Him, then one gives up the sandhya and other rites. When the young daughter-in-law is with child, the mother-in-law reduces her activities. When she has been pregnant for nine months, she is not allowed to perform any household duty. After the birth of the child, she only carries the child on her arm and nurses it. She has no other duty. After the attainment of God, the sandhya and other rites are given up.

"You cannot achieve anything by moving at such a slow pace. You need stern renunciation. Can you achieve anything by counting fifteen months as a year? You seem to have no strength, no grit. You are as mushy as flattened rice soaked in milk. Be up and doing! Gird your loins!

"I don't like that song :

Brother, joyfully cling to God.  
Thus striving, some day you may attain Him.

"I don't care for the line, 'Thus striving, some day you may attain Him. You need stern renunciation. I say the same thing to Hazra.

"You ask me why you don't feel stern renunciation. There is a reason for it. You have desires and tendencies within you. The same is true of Hazra. In our part of the country I have seen peasants bringing water into their paddy-fields. The fields have low ridges on all sides to prevent the water from leaking out; but these are made of mud and often have holes here and there. The peasants work themselves to death to bring the water, which, however, leaks out through the holes. Desires are the holes. You practise japa and austerities, no doubt, but they all leak out through the holes of your desires.

"They catch fish with a bamboo trap. The bamboo is naturally straight. But why is it bent in the trap? In order to catch the fish. Desires are the fish. Therefore the mind is bent down toward the world. If there are no desires, the mind naturally looks up toward God.

"Do you know what it is like? It is like the needles of a balance. On account of the weight of 'woman and gold' the two needles are not in line. It is 'woman and gold' that makes a man stray from the path of yoga. Haven't you noticed the flame of a candle? The slightest wind makes it waver. The state of yoga is like the candle-flame in a windless place.

"The mind is dispersed. Part of it has gone to Dacca, part to Delhi, and another part to Coochbehar. That mind is to be gathered in; it must be concentrated on one object. If you want sixteen annas' worth of cloth, then you have to pay the merchant the full sixteen annas. Yoga is not possible if there is the slightest obstacle. If there is a tiny break in the telegraph-wire, then the news cannot be transmitted.

"You are no doubt in the world. What if you are? You must surrender the fruit of your action to God. You must not seek any result for yourself. But mark one thing. The desire for bhakti cannot be called a desire. You may desire bhakti and pray for it. Practise the *tamas* of bhakti and force your demand upon the Divine Mother.

This bitterly contested suit between the Mother and Her son—  
 What sport it is ! says Ramprasad. I shall not cease tormenting  
 Thee  
 Till Thou Thyself shalt yield the fight and take me in Thine arms  
 at last.

"Trailokya once remarked, 'As I was born into the family, I have a share in the estate.'

"God is your own Mother. Is She a stepmother ? Is it an artificial relationship ? If you cannot force your demand on Her, then on whom can you force it ? Say to Her :

Mother, am I Thine eight-months child ?<sup>5</sup> Thy red eyes cannot  
 frighten me !  
 A deed of gift I hold in my heart, attested by Thy Husband Siva ;  
 I shall sue Thee, if I must, and with a single point shall win.

"God is your own Mother. Enforce your demand. If you are part of a thing, you feel its attraction. Because of the element of the Divine Mother in me I feel attracted to Her. A true Saiva has some of the characteristics of Siva ; he has in him some of the elements of Siva. He who is a true Vaishnava is endowed with some of the elements of Narayana.

"Nowadays you don't have to attend to worldly duties. Spend a few days thinking of God. You have seen that there is nothing to the world."

The Master sang :

Remember this, O mind ! Nobody is your own :  
 Vain is your wandering in this world.  
 Trapped in the subtle snare of maya as you are,  
 Do not forget the Mother's name.

Only a day or two men honour you on earth  
 As lord and master ; all too soon  
 That form, so honoured now, must needs be cast away,  
 When Death, the Master, seizes you.

Even your beloved wife, for whom, while yet you live,  
 You fret yourself almost to death,  
 Will not go with you then ; she too will say farewell,  
 And shun your corpse as an evil thing.

Continuing, the Master said : "What are these things you busy yourself with—this arbitration and leadership ? I hear that you settle people's quarrels and that they make you the arbiter. You have been doing this kind of work a long time. Let those who care for such things do them. Now devote your mind more and more to the Lotus Feet of God. The saying goes : 'Ravana died in Lanka and Behula<sup>6</sup> wept bitterly for him !'

"Sambhu, too, said, 'I shall build hospitals and dispensaries.' He was a devotee of God ; so I said to him, 'Will you ask God for hospitals and dispensaries when you see Him ?'

<sup>5</sup> A premature child is generally weak and fearful.

<sup>6</sup> Ravana and Behula were two persons totally unrelated to each other, having lived far apart in time and place.



"Keshab Sen asked me, 'Why do I not see God?' I said, 'You do not see God because you busy yourself with such things as name and fame and scholarship.' The mother does not come to the child as long as it sucks its toy—a red toy. But when, after a few minutes, it throws the toy away and cries, then the mother takes down the rice-pot from the hearth and comes running to the child.

"You are engaged in arbitration. The Divine Mother says to Herself : 'My child over there is now busy arbitrating and is very happy. Let him be.'"

In the mean time Ishan had been holding Sri Ramakrishna's feet. He said humbly, "It is not my will that I should do those things."

MASTER : "I know it. This is the Divine Mother's play—Her lila. It is the will of the Great Enchantress that many should remain entangled in the world. Do you know what it is like ?

How many are the boats, O mind,  
That float on the ocean of this world !  
How many are those that sink !

Again,

Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free ;  
And Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, O Mother, watching them !

Only one or two in a hundred thousand get liberation. The rest are entangled through the will of the Divine Mother.

"Haven't you seen the game of hide-and-seek ? It is the 'granny's' will that the game should continue. If all touch her and are released, then the playing comes to a stop. Therefore it is not her will that all should touch her.

"You see, in big grain stores the merchants keep rice in great heaps that touch the ceiling. Beside them there are heaps of lentils. To protect the grain from the mice, the merchants leave trays of puffed rice and sweetened rice near it. The mice like the smell and the sweet taste of these and so stay around the trays. They don't find the big heaps of grain. Similarly, men are deluded by 'woman and gold' ; they do not know where God is.

"Rama said to Narada, 'Ask a boon of Me.' Narada said : 'O Rama, is there anything I lack ? What shall I ask of Thee ? But if Thou must give me a boon, grant that I may have selfless love for Thy Lotus Feet and that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya.' Rama said, 'Narada ask something else.' Narada again replied : 'O Rama, I don't want anything else. Be gracious to me and see that I have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet.'

"I prayed to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother, I don't want name and fame. I don't want the eight occult powers. I don't want a hundred occult powers. O Mother, I have no desire for creature comforts. Please, Mother, grant me the boon that I may have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet.'

"It is written in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* that Lakshmana asked Rama : 'Rama, in how many forms and moods do You exist ? How shall I be able to recognize You ?' Rama said : 'Brother, remember this. You may be certain that I exist wherever you find the manifestation of ecstatic love.' That love makes one laugh and weep and dance and sing. If anyone has developed

such love, you may know for certain that God Himself is manifest there. Chaitanyadeva reached that state."

The devotees listened spellbound to Sri Ramakrishna. His burning words entered their souls, spurring them along the path of renunciation.

Now he spoke to Ishan in a serious voice.

MASTER: "Don't forget yourself because of what you hear from your flatterers. Flatterers gather around a worldly man. Vultures gather around the carcass of a cow.

"Worldly people have no stuff in them. They are like a heap of cow-dung. Flatterers come to them and say: 'You are so charitable and wise! You are so pious!' These are not mere words but pointed bamboos thrust at them. How foolish it is! To be surrounded day and night by a bunch of worldly brahmin pundits and hear their flattery!

"Worldly men are slaves of three things: they are slaves of their wives, slaves of their money, slaves of their masters. Can they have any inner stuff? There is a certain person whom I shall not name; he earns eight hundred rupees a month but is the slave of his wife. He stands up or sits down at her bidding.

"Arbitration and leadership? How trifling these are! Charity and doing good to others? You have had enough of these. Those who are to devote themselves to such things belong to a different class. Now the time is ripe for you to devote your mind to the Lotus Feet of God. If you realize God, you will get everything else. First God, then charity, doing good to others, doing good to the world, and redeeming people. Why need you worry about these things, 'Ravana died in Lanka and Behula wept for him bitterly!'

"That's the trouble with you. It will be very good if a world-renouncing sannyasi gives you some spiritual instruction. The advice of the worldly man will not be right, be he a brahmin pundit or anyone else.

"Be mad! Be mad with love of God! Let people know that Ishan has gone mad and cannot perform worldly duties any more. Then people will no longer come to you for leadership and arbitration. Throw aside the kosakusi and justify your name of Ishan."

Ishan quoted:

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love!  
What need have I of knowledge or reason?

MASTER: "Mad! That's the thing! Shivanath once said that one 'loses one's head' by thinking too much of God. 'What?' said I. 'Can anyone ever become unconscious by thinking of Consciousness? God is of the nature of Eternity, Purity, and Consciousness. Through His Consciousness one becomes conscious of everything; through His Intelligence the whole world appears intelligent.' Shivanath said that some Europeans had gone insane, that they had 'lost their heads', by thinking too much about God. In their case it may be true; for they think of worldly things. There is a line in a song: 'Divine fervour fills my body and robs me of consciousness.' The consciousness referred to here is the consciousness of the outer world."

<sup>1</sup> An epithet of the all-renouncing Siva.



KALI, THE DIVINE MOTHER, ALSO KNOWN AS BHAVATARINI  
(Sri Ramakrishna worshipped this image in the Dakshineswar temple.)



Ishan was seated touching Sri Ramakrishna's feet and listening to his words. Now and then he cast a glance at the basalt image of Kali in the shrine. In the light of the lamp She appeared to be smiling. It was as if the living Deity, manifesting Herself through the image, was delighted to hear the Master's words, holy as the words of the Vedas.

ISHAN (*pointing to the image*): "Those words from your sacred lips have really come from there."

MASTER: "I am the machine and She is the Operator. I am the house and She is the Indweller. I am the chariot and She is the Charioteer. I move as She moves me; I speak as She speaks through me. In the Kaliyuga one does not hear the voice of God, it is said, except through the mouth of a child or a madman or some such person.

"A man cannot be a guru. Everything happens by the will of God. Heinous sins—the sins of many births—and accumulated ignorance all disappear in the twinkling of an eye, through the grace of God. When light enters a room that has been kept dark a thousand years, does it remove the thousand years' darkness little by little, or instantly? Of course, at the mere touch of light all the darkness disappears.

"What can a man do? He may speak many words, but after all is said and done everything rests with God. The lawyer says: 'I have said all that can be said. Now the verdict rests with the judge.'

"Brahman is actionless. When It is engaged in creation, preservation, and dissolution, It is called the Primal Power, *Adyasakti*. This power must be propitiated. Don't you know that it is so written in the *Chandi*? The gods first sang a hymn to the *Adyasakti* in order to propitiate Her. Only then did Hari wake up from His yoga sleep."

ISHAN: "Yes, sir. Brahma and the other gods sang this hymn at the time of the death of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha:

*Svaha, Vashat, and Svadha* art Thou;<sup>8</sup> Thou the inner Self of the mantra;

Thou the Nectar of Immortality, O Everlasting One!  
Eternal and unutterable art Thou, and yet Thou art manifest  
In the three *matras*<sup>9</sup> and the half *matra*.<sup>10</sup>

O Goddess, Thou art *Savitri*;<sup>11</sup> Thou art the Ultimate Mother;  
All things have their support in Thee, by whom this universe was  
made.

O Goddess, Thou sustainest all, and all by Thee is devoured!

Thou it is that we call the Creator, when Thou createst the world,  
O Embodiment of creation!

Thou it is that we call the Preserver, when Thou preservest it;  
Thou it is that we call the Destroyer, when Thou destroyest it."

<sup>8</sup> *Svaha, Vashat, and Svadha* are mystic syllables. The first two are uttered while oblations are being offered to the gods, and the third while they are being offered to the ancestors.

<sup>9</sup> The length of time for pronouncing a vowel sound. The "three *matras*" denote the three durations—short, long, or protracted—required for pronouncing vowels.

<sup>10</sup> A consonant sound.

<sup>11</sup> The presiding deity of *Om*, the essence of the Vedas.



MASTER : " Yes, but you must assimilate that."

The Master rose. He mounted the platform in front of the shrine and saluted the Mother, touching the ground with his forehead. The devotees quickly gathered around him and fell at his feet. They all begged his grace. He descended from the platform and started toward his room, conversing with M. First he sang :

I bow my head, says Prasad, before desire and liberation ;  
Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman,  
I have discarded, once for all, both dharma and adharma.

The Master continued : " Do you know the meaning of dharma and adharma ? Here dharma means religious acts enjoined by the scriptures, such as charity, sraddha, feeding the poor, and the like.

" The performance of this dharma is called the path of karma. It is an extremely difficult path : it is very hard to act without motive. Therefore one is asked to pursue the path of devotion.

" A man was performing the sraddha ceremony at his house. He was feeding many people. Just then a butcher passed, leading a cow to slaughter. He could not control the animal and became exhausted. He said to himself : ' Let me go into that house and enjoy the feast of the sraddha ceremony and strengthen my body. Then I shall be able to drag the cow along.' So he carried out his intention. But when he killed the cow, the sin of the slaughter fell also on the performer of the sraddha. That is why I say the path of devotion is better than the path of action."

The Master entered his room accompanied by M. He was humming a song. The forceful words of renunciation that he had just spoken to Ishan found expression through its words. He sang the lines :

Mother, take everything else away from me,  
But leave me my necklace of bones and my pot of hemp !<sup>12</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna sat down on the small couch, and Adhar, Kishori, and the other devotees sat on the floor.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " I was noticing Ishan. Why, he hasn't achieved anything ! What can be the reason ? He practised the purascharana for five months. That would have caused a revolution in any other person."

ADHAR : " It wasn't wise of you to say those things to him in front of us."

MASTER : " How is that ? He is so much given to japa ! How can words affect him ?"

After a while Sri Ramakrishna said to Adhar, " Ishan is very charitable, and he practises japa and austerity a great deal." The Master remained quiet a few moments. The eyes of the devotees were fixed on him. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna said to Adhar, " You have both—yoga and bhoga."

Saturday, October 18, 1884

It was the day of the worship of Kali, the Divine Mother. The worship was to begin at eleven o'clock at night. Several devotees arrived at the temple

<sup>12</sup> Siddhi, or hemp, and the necklace of bones are associated with Siva, the model of renunciation.

garden early in the evening. They wanted to visit Sri Ramakrishna during the holy hours of the night of the new moon.

M. came alone to the garden about eight o'clock in the evening. The great religious festival had already begun. Lamps had been lighted here and there in the garden, and the temples were brightly illuminated. Music could be heard in the nahabat. The temple officers were moving about hurriedly. There was to be a theatrical performance in the early hours of the morning. The villagers had heard of the festive occasion, and a large crowd of men and women, young and old, was streaming in.

In the afternoon there had been a musical recital of the *Chandi* by Rajnarayan. Sri Ramakrishna had been present with the devotees and had enjoyed the recital immensely. As the time for the worship approached, he was overwhelmed with ecstasy.

M. found Sri Ramakrishna seated on the small couch in his room. Baburam, the younger Gopal, Haripada, Kishori, a relative of Niranjan, a young man from Ariadaha, and other devotees were seated on the floor facing him. Ramlal and Hazra were in the room part of the time. Niranjan's young relative was meditating in front of Sri Ramakrishna, as the Master had bidden.

M. saluted the Master and took a seat. After a while Niranjan's relative bowed low before Sri Ramakrishna and was about to depart. The young man from Ariadaha also wished to leave. The Master said to Niranjan's relative, "When will you come again?"

DEVOTEE : "Perhaps next Monday."

MASTER (*eagerly*) : "Do you want a lantern to take with you?"

DEVOTEE : "No, sir, I live next to this garden. I don't need a lantern."

MASTER (*to the young man from Ariadaha*) : "Are you going too?"

YOUNG MAN : "Yes, sir, I have a slight cold."

MASTER : "All right. Cover your head."

They again saluted the Master and took their leave.

It was the awe-inspiring night of the new moon. The worship of the Divine Mother added to its solemnity. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the couch, leaning against a pillow. His mind was indrawn. Now and then he exchanged a word or two with the devotees. Suddenly he looked at M. and the other devotees and said : "Ah, how deep the young man's meditation was ! (*To Haripada*) Wasn't it deep?"

HARIPADA : "Yes, sir, he was motionless as a log."

MASTER (*to Kishori*) : "Do you know that boy? He is a cousin of Niranjan."

Again there was silence in the room. Haripada was gently stroking the Master's feet. The Master was humming some of the songs he had heard that evening during the recital of the *Chandi*. He sang softly :

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ?

Even the six darsanas are powerless to reveal Her. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna sat up. With intense fervour he began to sing about the Divine Mother :

All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali ;  
 By Her maya the three worlds are bewitched.  
 Mad is She and mad is Her Husband ; mad are Her two disciples !  
 None can describe Her loveliness, Her glories, gestures, moods ;  
 Siva, with the agony of the poison in His throat,  
 Chants Her name again and again.

The Personal does She oppose to the Impersonal,  
 Breaking one stone with another ;  
 Though to all else She is agreeable,  
 Where duties are concerned She will not yield.  
 Keep your raft, says Ramprasad, afloat on the sea of life,  
 Drifting up with the flood-tide, drifting down with the ebb.

The Master was quite overwhelmed with the song. He said that songs like these denoted a state of divine inebriation. He sang one after another :

This time I shall devour Thee utterly, Mother Kali !  
 For I was born under an evil star,  
 And one so born becomes, they say, the eater of his mother. . . .

Then :

O Kali, my Mother full of Bliss ! Enchantress of the almighty Siva !  
 In Thy delirious joy Thou dancest, clapping Thy hands together ! . . .

And then :

If at the last my life-breath leaves me as I repeat the name of Kali,  
 I shall attain the realm of Siva. What does Benares mean to me ?  
 Infinite are my Mother's glories ; who can find the end of Her  
 virtues ?  
 Siva, beholding their smallest part, lies prostrate at Her Lotus  
 Feet.

The singing was over. Two sons of Rajnarayan entered the room and bowed low before the Master. In the afternoon they had sung with their father the glories of the Divine Mother. The Master sang again with them :

All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali. . . .

The younger brother requested Sri Ramakrishna to sing a certain song about Sri Gauṛāṅga. The Master sang :

Gaur and Nitai, ye blessed brothers !  
 I have heard how kind you are,  
 And therefore I have come to you. . . .

Ramlal entered the room. The Master said to him ! " Please sing something about the Divine Mother. It is the day of Her worship."

Ramlal sang :

Who is the Woman yonder who lights the field of battle ?  
 Darker Her body gleams even than the darkest storm-cloud,  
 And from Her teeth there flash the lightning's blinding flames !  
 Dishevelled Her hair is flying behind as She rushes about,  
 Undaunted in this war between the gods and the demons.  
 Laughing Her terrible laugh, She slays the fleeing asuras,  
 And with Her dazzling flashes She bares the horror of war. . . .

Again Ramlal sang :

Who is this terrible Woman, dark as the sky at midnight ?  
Who is this Woman dancing over the field of battle ? . . .

Sri Ramakrishna began to dance to the song. Then he himself sang :

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight  
To the blue lotus flower of Mother Syama's feet,  
The blue flower of the feet of Kali, Siva's Consort,  
Tasteless, to the bee, are the blossoms of desire,  
My Mother's feet are black, and black, too, is the bee ;  
Black is made one with black ! This much of the mystery  
These mortal eyes behold, then hastily retreat.  
But Kamalakanta's hopes are answered in the end ;  
He swims in the Sea of Bliss, unmoved by joy or pain.

After the music and dancing Sri Ramakrishna sat on the couch and the devotees sat on the floor. He said to M. : " It is a pity you weren't here in the afternoon. The musical recital of the *Chandi* was very fine."

Some of the devotees went to the temple to salute the image of the Divine Mother. Others sat quietly performing japa on the steps leading to the Ganges. It was about eleven o'clock, the most auspicious time for contemplation of the Divine Mother. The flood-tide was rising in the Ganges, and the lights on its banks were reflected here and there in its dark waters.

From outside the shrine M. was looking wistfully at the image. Ramlal came to the temple with a book in his hand containing the rules of the worship. He asked M. if he wanted to come in. M. felt highly favoured and entered the shrine. He saw that the Divine Mother was profusely decorated. The room was brilliantly illuminated by a large chandelier that hung from the ceiling. Two candles were burning in front of the image. On the floor were trays full of offerings. Red hibiscus flowers and bel-leaves adorned Her feet. She wore garlands round Her neck. M.'s eyes fell on the chamara. Suddenly he remembered that Sri Ramakrishna often fanned the Divine Mother with it. With some hesitation he asked Ramlal if he might fan the image. The priest gave his permission. M. joyously fanned the image. The regular worship had not yet begun.

The devotees again entered the Master's room. Beni Pal had invited Sri Ramakrishna to visit the Sinthi Brahmo Samaj the next day, but had made a mistake in his letter with regard to the date.

MASTER (to M.) : " Beni Pal has sent me an invitation. But why has he put the wrong date ? "

M : " The date was not written correctly. He wrote the letter carelessly."

As Sri Ramakrishna spoke, he was standing in the middle of the room with Baburam by his side. He leaned toward the disciple, touching his body. Suddenly he went into samadhi. The devotees stood around with their eyes fixed on him. The Master's left foot was advanced a little ; the shoulder was slightly inclined to one side ; his arm rested on Baburam's neck near the ear. After a while he came down from the ecstatic state. As he stood there he put



one hand to his cheek and appeared to be brooding over something. Then, smiling, he addressed the devotees.

MASTER : " I saw everything—how far the devotees had advanced. I saw Rakhal, him (*pointing to M.*), Surendra, Baburam, and many others."

HAZRA : " Me ? "

MASTER : " Yes."

HAZRA : " Many more obstacles ? "

MASTER : " No."

HAZRA : " What about Narendra ? "

MASTER : " I didn't see him. But I can tell about him. He is a little entangled. But I saw that everyone will succeed. (*To M.*) I saw that all are in hiding."

The devotees listened to these words with great wonder. It seemed to them that they were hearing an oracle.

MASTER : " But I got into that mood by touching Baburam."

HAZRA : " Who is first ? "

Sri Ramakrishna was quiet for a time. Then he said, " I wish I had a few like Nityagopal." Again he appeared thoughtful. He remained standing. He said : " I wish Adhar Sen's duties would become fewer. But I am afraid the English officer will scold him. He may say, ' What is all this nonsense ? ' " (*All smile.*)

Sri Ramakrishna sat on the small couch, and the devotees on the floor. Baburam and Kishori came quickly to the Master and began to stroke his feet gently.

MASTER (*to Kishori*) : " What's the matter ? Why so much service today ? "

Ramlal entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna, touching the ground with his forehead. Then with great respect he touched the Master's feet. He was ready to worship the Divine Mother in the temple.

RAMLAL : " Please permit me to go to the shrine."

The Master twice uttered the words " Om Kali " and said : " Perform the worship carefully. There is also a sheep to be slaughtered."

It was midnight. The worship began in the Kali temple. The Master went to watch the ceremony. During the worship he stood near the image. Now the sheep was going to be slaughtered. The animal was consecrated before the Deity. People stood in lines watching the ceremony. While the sheep was being taken to the block Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room. He could not bear the sight.

Several devotees remained in the temple till two o'clock in the morning. Haripada came and asked them to take the prasad to the Master's room. After finishing their meal they lay down wherever they could for the remainder of the night.

It was morning. The dawn service in the temples was over and the theatrical performance was going on in the open hall in front of the shrine. M. was coming through the courtyard with Sri Ramakrishna. He wanted to take leave of the Master.

MASTER : " Why should you go now ? "

■ : " You are going to Sinthi in the afternoon. I too intend to be there. So I should like to go home for a few hours. "

They came to the Kali temple. At the foot of the steps M. saluted the Master.

MASTER : " You are going ? All right. Please bring two pieces of cheap cloth for me. I shall use them while taking my bath. "

## XXXII

### VISIT TO THE SINTHI BRAHMO SAMAJ

October 19, 1884

ON THIS DAY Sri Ramakrishna again visited the Sinthi Brahmo Samaj. It was the occasion of the autumn festival of the Samaj, which was being celebrated at Benimadhav Pal's garden house. The hall was decorated with flowers and greens, flags and festoons, of various colours. Outside, the blue autumn sky with its fleecy clouds was reflected in the water of the lake.

Sri Ramakrishna arrived at half past four in the afternoon. Entering the hall, he bowed down before the altar. The Brahmo devotees, among whom could be noticed Vijay and Trailokya, sat around him. A sub-judge, who was a member of the Brahmo Samaj, was with them.

Trailokya was entertaining the devotees with his melodious music.

MASTER (*to Trailokya*): "That song of yours, 'O Mother, make me mad with Thy love', I enjoy very much. Won't you sing it?"

Trailokya sang :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !  
What need have I of knowledge or reason ?  
Make me drunk with Thy love's Wine ;  
O Thou who stealest Thy bhaktas' hearts,  
Drown me deep in the Sea of Thy love !  
Here in this world, this madhouse of Thine,  
Some laugh, some weep, some dance for joy :  
Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Gauranga,  
All are drunk with the Wine of Thy love.  
O Mother, when shall I be blessed  
By joining their blissful company ?

As he listened to the song, the Master's mind underwent a transformation, and presently he went into deep samadhi. Coming down a-little to the plane of the sense world, he gave instruction to the devotees. His mind was still charged with the divine experience. His words were spoken as if in a state of intoxication. Gradually he became again fully conscious of the world.

MASTER : "O Mother ! I don't want the bliss of divine inebriation. I shall eat siddhi.

(*To the devotees*) "By 'siddhi' I mean the attainment of the spiritual goal and not one of the eight occult powers. About the occult powers, Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Friend, if you find anyone who has acquired even one of the eight powers, then know for certain he will not realize Me.' For powers surely beget pride, and God cannot be realized if there is the slightest trace of pride.

"According to a certain school of thought there are four classes of devotees : the pravartaka, the sadhaka, the siddha, and the siddha of the siddha. He who has just begun religious life is a pravartaka. Such a man puts his denominational marks on his body and forehead, wears a rosary around his neck, and scrupulously follows other outer conventions. The sadhaka has advanced farther. His desire for outer show has become less. He longs for the realization of God and prays to Him sincerely. He repeats the name of God and calls on Him with a guileless heart. Now, whom should we call the siddha ? He who has the absolute conviction that God exists and is the sole Doer ; he who has seen God. And who is the siddha of the siddha ? He who has not merely seen God, but has intimately talked with Him as Father, Son, or Beloved.

"It is one thing to believe beyond a doubt that fire exists in wood, but it is quite another to get the fire from the wood, cook rice with its help, appease one's hunger, and so be satisfied. These are two entirely different things.

"No one can put a limit to spiritual experience. If you refer to one experience, there is another beyond that, and still another, and so on.

(*In an ecstatic mood, referring to the Brahmos*) "They are Brahmajnanis. They believe in the formless Deity. That is good.

(*To the Brahmo devotees*) "Be firm in one ideal—either in God with form or in the formless God. Then alone will you realize God ; otherwise not. With firm and unwavering belief the followers of God with form will realize Him, as will those who speak of Him as formless. You may eat a cake with icing either straight or sidewise ; it will taste sweet either way. (*All laugh.*)

"But you must have firm conviction, you must pray to Him wholeheartedly. Do you know what the God of worldly people is like ? It is like children's saying to one another while at play, 'I swear by God.' They have learnt the word from the quarrels of their aunts or grandmothers. Or it is like God to a dandy. The dandy, all spick and span, his lips red from chewing betel-leaf, walks in the garden, cane in hand, and, plucking a flower, exclaims to his friend, 'Ah ! What a beautiful flower God has made !' But this feeling of a worldly person is momentary. It lasts as long as a drop of water on a red-hot frying-pan.

"You must be firm in one ideal. Dive deep. Otherwise you cannot get the gems at the bottom of the ocean. You cannot pick up the gems if you only float on the surface."

With these words the Master sang in the sweet voice that had bewitched the hearts of devotees like Keshab :

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty ;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love. . . .



The devotees felt as if they were in paradise itself.

MASTER (*to the Brahmos*): "Dive deep. Learn to love God. Plunge into divine love. You see, I have heard how you pray. Why do you Brahmos dwell so much on the glories of God? Is there such great need of your saying over and over again, 'O God, You have created the sky, the great oceans, the lunar world, the solar world, and the stellar world'?"

"Everybody is wonder-struck at the mere sight of a rich man's garden house. People become speechless at the sight of the trees, the flowers, the ponds, the drawing-room, the pictures. But alas, how few are they who seek the owner of all these! Only one or two inquire after him. He who seeks God with a longing heart can see Him, talk to Him as I am talking to you. Believe my words when I say that God can be seen. But ah! To whom am I saying these words? Who will believe me?"

"Can one find God in the sacred books? By reading the scriptures one may feel at the most that God exists. But God does not reveal Himself to a man unless he himself dives deep. Only after such a plunge, after the revelation of God through His grace, is one's doubt destroyed. You may read scriptures by the thousands and recite thousands of texts; but unless you plunge into God with yearning of heart, you will not comprehend Him. By mere scholarship you may fool man, but not God.

"Scriptures and books—what can one achieve with these alone? Nothing can be realized without His grace. Strive with a longing heart for His grace. Through His grace you will see Him and He will talk to you."

SUB-JUDGE: "Sir, does God show more grace to one than to another? If so, He can be accused of the fault of partiality."

MASTER: "What are you saying? Do you mean to say that the moon and a glow-worm are the same, though both give light? Iswar Vidyasagar asked me the same question. He said, 'Is it a fact, sir, that God gives more power to one and less to another?' 'God', I said, 'exists in every being as the All-pervading Spirit. He is in the ant as well as in me. But there are different manifestations of His Power in different beings. If all are the same, then why have we come here to see you, attracted by your renown? Have you grown a pair of horns? Oh, no! It is not that. You have compassion; you have scholarship; there is a greater degree of these virtues in you than in others. That is the reason you are so well known.' Don't you see that there are men who, single-handed, can defeat a hundred persons? Again, one man takes to his heels in fear of another; you see such a person, too. If there are not different manifestations of power in different beings, then why did people respect Keshab Sen so much?"

"It is said in the *Gita* that if a man is respected and honoured by many, whether it be for his scholarship or his music or his oratory or anything else, then you may know for certain that he is endowed with a special divine power."

A BRAHMO (*to the sub-judge*): "Why don't you accept what he says?"

MASTER (*sharply, to the Brahmo*): "What sort of man are you? To accept words without conviction! Why, that is hypocrisy! I see you are only a counterfeit."

The Brahmo was much embarrassed.

SUB-JUDGE : " Sir, must we renounce the world ? "

MASTER : " No. Why should you ? A man can realize God even in the world. But at the beginning he must spend a few days in solitude. He must practise spiritual discipline in a solitary place. He should take a room near his house, so that he may come home only for his meals. Keshab, Pratap, and others said to me, ' Sir, we follow the ideal of King Janaka.' ' Mere words don't make a King Janaka,' I replied. ' How many austerities King Janaka first had to perform in solitude—standing on his head,<sup>1</sup> and so on ! Do something first ; then you may become a King Janaka.' You see a man writing English fluently ; but could he do that at the very start ? Perhaps he was the son of poor parents ; he was cook in a family and earned his meals by his service. Perhaps he had to struggle hard to go on with his studies. It is after all these efforts that he can now write such fluent English.

" I said to Keshab Sen further, ' How can the worldly man be cured of his serious disease unless he goes into solitude ? ' A worldly man is suffering from delirious fever, as it were. Suppose there are pickled tamarind and jars of water in the room of such a patient. Now, how can you expect him to get rid of the disease ? Just see, the very mention of pickled tamarind is making my mouth water ! (*All laugh.*) You can very well imagine what will happen if the tamarind is actually put in front of me. To a man, a woman is the pickled tamarind, and his desire for enjoyment, the jars of water. There is neither end nor limit to this desire for worldly enjoyment. And the things are in the patient's very room. Can you expect the patient to get rid of the delirious fever in this fashion ? He must be removed for a few days to another place where there are neither pickled tamarind nor water-jars. Then he will be cured. After that if he returns to his old room he will have nothing to fear. ' Woman and gold ' cannot do any harm to the man who lives in the world after attaining God. Only then can he lead a detached life in the world as King Janaka did. But he must be careful at the beginning. He must practise spiritual discipline in strict solitude. The peepal-tree, when young, is fenced around to protect it from cattle. But there is no need for the fence when the trunk grows thick and strong. Then no harm will be done to the tree even if an elephant is tied to it. ' Woman and gold ' will not be able to harm you in the least, if you go home and lead a householder's life after increasing your spiritual strength and developing love for the Lotus Feet of God through the practice of spiritual discipline in solitude.

" A man sets milk in a quiet place to curdle, and then he extracts butter from the curd. After once extracting the butter of Devotion and Knowledge from the milk of the mind, if you keep that transformed mind in the water of the world, it will float in the world unattached. But if the mind in its ' unripe ' state—that is to say, when it is just like liquid milk—is kept in the water of the world, then the milk and water will get mixed. In that case it will be impossible for the mind to float unattached in the world.

<sup>1</sup> One of the exercises sometimes practised by hathayogis ; also an expression to describe the austerities of yoga in general.

"Live in the world but, in order to realize God, hold fast to His Lotus Feet with one hand and with the other do your duties. When you get a respite from your duties, cling to God's Lotus Feet with both hands—live in solitude and meditate on Him and serve Him ceaselessly."

SUB-JUDGE (*joyously*): "Sir, these are very beautiful words indeed. Of course one must practise spiritual discipline in solitude. But we forget all about it. We think we have become King Janaka outright! (*The Master and the devotees laugh.*) I feel very happy and peaceful even to hear that there is no need to give up the world and that God can be realized from home as well."

MASTER: "Why should you give up the world? Since you must fight, it is wise for you to fight from a fort. You must fight against your sense-organs, against your hunger and thirst. Therefore you will be wise to face the battle from the world. Further, in the Kaliyuga the life of a man depends on his food. If one day you have nothing to eat, then you will forget all about God. A man once said to his wife, 'I am going to leave the world.' She was a sensible woman. She said: 'Why should you wander about? If you don't have to knock at ten doors for your stomach's sake, go. But if you have to, then better live in this one place.'

"Again I say, why should you give up the world? You will find it more convenient at home. You won't have to worry about food. You may even live with your wife. It isn't harmful. You will find near at hand all that the body needs at different times. When you are ill, you will have someone near you to nurse you.

"Sages like Janaka, Vyasa, and Vasishtha lived in the world after attaining Knowledge. They fenced with two swords, the one of Knowledge and the other of action."

SUB-JUDGE: "How can we know that we have Knowledge?"

MASTER: "When one has Knowledge one does not see God any more at a distance. One does not think of Him any more as 'He'. He becomes 'This'. Then He is seen in one's own heart. God dwells in every man. He who seeks God realizes Him."

SUB-JUDGE: "Sir, I am a sinner. How can I say that God dwells in me?"

MASTER: "That's the one trouble with you Brahmos. With you it is always sin and sin! That's the Christian view, isn't it? Once a man gave me a Bible. A part of it was read to me, and it was full of that one thing—sin and sin! One must have such faith that one can say: 'I have uttered the name of God; I have repeated the name of Rama or Hari. How can I be a sinner?' One must have faith in the glory of God's name."

SUB-JUDGE: "Sir, how can one have such faith?"

MASTER: "Have passionate love for God. One of your Brahmo songs says:

O Lord, is it ever possible to know Thee without love,  
However much one may perform worship and sacrifice?

Pray to God in secret and with yearning, that you may have that passionate attachment and devotion to Him. Shed tears for Him. A man sheds a joyful

of tears because his wife is sick or because he is losing money or because he is worrying about getting a job. But tell me, who ever weeps for God ? ”

TRAILOKYA : “ Sir, where is people's leisure ? They must serve their English masters.”

MASTER : “ Well, then give God the power of attorney. If a man entrusts his affairs to a good person, will the latter do him any harm ? With all the sincerity of your heart resign yourself to God and drive all your worries out of your mind. Do whatever duties He has assigned to you. The kitten does not have a calculating mind. It only cries, ‘ Mew, mew ! ’ It lies in the kitchen contentedly if the mother cat leaves it there, and only calls the mother, crying, ‘ Mew, mew ! ’ It has the same feeling of contentment when the mother cat puts it on the soft bed of the master of the house. It only cries for its mother.”

SUB-JUDGE : “ Sir, we are householders. How long should we perform our worldly duties ? ”

MASTER : “ Surely you have duties to perform. You must bring up your children, support your wife, and provide for her in case of your death. If you don't, then I shall call you unkind. Sages like Sukadeva had compassion. He who has no compassion is no man.”

SUB-JUDGE : “ How long should one support one's children ? ”

MASTER : “ As long as they have not reached their majority. When the chick becomes a full-grown bird and can look after itself, then the mother bird pecks it and doesn't allow it to come near her.” (*All laugh.*)

SUB-JUDGE : “ What is a householder's duty to his wife ? ”

MASTER : “ You should give her spiritual advice and support her during your lifetime and provide for her livelihood after your death, if she is a chaste wife.

“ But ■ you are intoxicated with the Knowledge of God, then you have no more duties to perform. Then God Himself will think about your morrow if you yourself cannot do so. God Himself will think about your family if you are intoxicated with Him. If a landlord dies leaving behind a minor son, then a guardian appointed by the court takes charge of the son. These are all points of law ; you know them.”

SUB-JUDGE : “ Yes, sir.”

VIJAY : “ Ah ! Priceless words ! God Himself carries on His shoulders all the responsibilities of a person who thinks of Him with single-minded devotion and is mad with divine love. A minor gets his guardian without seeking him. Alas, when shall I have that state of mind ? How lucky they are who feel that way ! ”

TRAILOKYA : “ Is it ever possible, sir, to have true knowledge of God while living in the world ? Can one realize God here ? ”

MASTER (*with a smile*) : “ Why do you worry ? You are enjoying both treacle and refined sugar. (*All laugh.*) You are living in the world with your mind in God. Isn't that true ? Why shouldn't a man realize God in the world ? Certainly he can.”

TRAILOKYA : “ What are the signs of a householder's having attained Knowledge ? ”



MASTER : " His tears will flow, and the hair of his body will stand on end. No sooner does he hear the sweet name of God than the hair on his body stands on end from sheer delight, and tears roll down his cheeks.

" A man cannot get rid of body-consciousness as long as he is attached to worldly things and loves ' woman and gold '. As he becomes less and less attached to worldly things, he approaches nearer and nearer to the Knowledge of Self. He also becomes less and less conscious of his body. He attains Self-Knowledge when his worldly attachment totally disappears. Then he realizes that body and soul are two separate things. It is very difficult to separate with a knife the kernel of a coconut from the shell before the milk inside has dried up. When the milk dries up, the kernel rattles inside the shell. At that time it loosens itself from the shell. Then the fruit is called a dry coconut.

" The sign of a man's having realized God is that he has become like a dry coconut. He has become utterly free from the consciousness that he is the body. He does not feel happy or unhappy with the happiness or unhappiness of the body. He does not seek the comforts of the body. He roams about in the world as a jivanmukta, one liberated in life. ' The devotee of Kali is a jivanmukta, full of Eternal Bliss. '

" When you find that the very mention of God's name brings tears to your eyes and makes your hair stand on end, then you will know that you have freed yourself from attachment to ' woman and gold ' and attained God. If the matches are dry, you get a spark by striking only one of them. But if they are damp, you don't get a spark even if you strike fifty. You only waste matches. Similarly, if your mind is soaked in the pleasure of worldly things, in ' woman and gold ', then God-Consciousness will not be kindled in you. You may try a thousand times, but all your efforts will be futile. But no sooner does attachment to worldly pleasure dry up than the spark of God flashes forth."

TRAILOKYA : " What is the way to dry up the craving for worldly pleasure ? "

MASTER : " Pray to the Divine Mother with a longing heart. Her vision dries up all craving for the world and completely destroys all attachment to ' woman and gold '. It happens instantly if you think of Her as your own mother. She is by no means a godmother. She is your own mother. With a yearning heart persist in your demands on Her. The child holds to the skirt of its mother and begs a penny of her to buy a kite. Perhaps the mother is gossiping with her friends. At first she refuses to give the penny and says to the child : ' No, you can't have it. Your daddy has asked me not to give you money. When he comes home I'll ask him about it. You will get into trouble if you play with a kite now. ' The child begins to cry and will not give up his demand. Then the mother says to her friends : ' Excuse me a moment. Let me pacify this. ' Immediately she unlocks the cash-box with a click and throws the child a penny.

" You too must force your demand on the Divine Mother. She will come to you without fail. I once said the same thing to some Sikhs when they visited the temple at Dakshineswar. We were conversing in front of the Kali temple. They said, ' God is compassionate. ' ' Why compassionate ? ' I asked.

They said, 'Why, revered sir, He constantly looks after us, gives us righteousness and wealth, and provides us with our food.' 'Suppose', I said, 'a man has children. Who will look after them and provide them with food—their own father, or a man from another village?'

SUB-JUDGE: "Is not God, then, compassionate, sir?"

MASTER: "Why should you think that? I just made a remark. What I mean to say is that God is our very own. We can exert force on Him. With one's own people one can even go so far as to say, 'You rascal! Won't you give it to me?'"

(To the Sub-judge) "Let me ask you one thing. Are vanity and egotism the result of knowledge or of ignorance? Egotism is of the nature of *tamas*; it is begotten by ignorance. On account of the barrier of ego one does not see God. 'All troubles come to an end when the ego dies.' It is futile to be egotistic. Neither body nor wealth will last. Once a drunkard was looking at the image of Durga. At the sight of Her decorations, he said, 'Well, Mother! However You may fix Yourself up, after two or three days they will drag You out and throw You into the Ganges.'"*(All laugh.)*

"So I say to you all, you may be a judge or anybody else, but it is all for two days only. Therefore you should give up vanity and pride.

"The characteristics of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are very different. Egotism, sleep, gluttony, lust, anger, and the like, are the traits of people with *tamas*. Men with *rajas* entangle themselves in many activities. Such a man has clothes all spick and span. His house is immaculately clean. A portrait of the Queen<sup>3</sup> hangs on a wall in his drawing-room. When he worships God he wears a silk cloth. He has a string of *rudraksha* beads around his neck, and in between the beads he puts a few gold ones. When someone comes to visit the worship hall in his house, he himself acts as guide. After showing the hall, he says to the visitor: 'Please come this way, sir. There are other things too—the floor of white marble and the *natmandir* with its exquisite carvings.' When he gives in charity he makes a show of it. But a man endowed with *sattva* is quiet and peaceful. So far as dress is concerned, anything will do. He earns only enough money to give his stomach the simplest of food; he never flatters men to get money. His house is out of repair. He never worries about his children's clothing. He does not hanker for name and fame. His worship, charity, and meditation are all done in secret; people do not know about them at all. He meditates inside his mosquito curtain. People think he doesn't sleep well at night and for that reason sleeps late in the morning. *Sattva* is the last step of the stairs; next is the roof. As soon as *sattva* is acquired there is no further delay in attaining God. One step forward and God is realized. (To the sub-judge) Didn't you say that all men were equal? Now you see that there are so many varieties of human nature.

"There are still other classes and kinds of people. For instance, there are those who are eternally free, those who have attained liberation, those struggling for liberation, and those entangled in the world. So many varieties of

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to the immersion of the image after the worship.

<sup>3</sup> Queen Victoria.

men ! Sages like Narada and Sukadeva are eternally free. They are like a steamship, which not only crosses the ocean but can carry big animals, even an elephant. Further, the soul that is eternally free is like the superintendent of an estate. After bringing one part of the estate under control, he goes to another. Those struggling for liberation strive heart and soul to free themselves from the net of the world. One or two of them may get out of the net. They are called the liberated. The souls that are eternally free are like clever fish ; they are never caught in the net.

" But the souls that are entangled, involved in worldliness, never come to their senses. They lie in the net but are not even conscious that they are entangled. If you speak of God before them, they at once leave the place. They say : ' Why God now ? We shall think of Him in the hour of death.' But when they lie on their death-beds, they say to their wives or children : ' Why have you put so many wicks in the lamp ? Use only one wick. Otherwise too much oil will be burnt.' While dying they think of their wives and children, and weep, ' Alas ! What will happen to them after my death ? '

" The entangled souls repeat those very actions that make them suffer so much. They are like the camel, which eats thorny bushes till the blood streams from its mouth, but still will not give them up. Such a man may have lost his son and be stricken with grief, but still he will have children year after year. He may ruin himself by his daughter's marriage, but still he will go on having daughters every year. And he says : ' What can I do ? It's just my luck ! ' When he goes to a holy place he doesn't have any time to think of God. He almost kills himself carrying bundles for his wife. Entering the temple, he is very eager to give his child the holy water to drink or make him roll on the floor ; but he has no time for his own devotions. These bound creatures slave for their masters to earn food for themselves and their families ; and they earn money by lying, cheating, flattery. They laugh at those who think of God and meditate on Him, and call them lunatics.

" So you see how many different kinds of men there are. You said that all men were equal. But how many varieties of men there are ! Some have more power and some less.

" The entangled creatures, attached to worldliness, talk only of worldly things in the hour of death. What will it avail such men if they outwardly repeat the name of God, take a bath in the Ganges, or visit sacred places ? If they cherish within themselves attachment to the world, it must show up at the hour of death. While dying they rave nonsense. Perhaps they cry out in a delirium, ' Turmeric powder ! Seasoning ! Bay-leaf ! ' The singing parrot, when at ease, repeats the holy names of Radha and Krishna, but when it is seized by a cat it utters its own natural sound : it squawks, ' Kaa ! Kaa ! ' It is said in the *Gita* that whatever one thinks in the hour of death, one becomes in the after-life. King Bharata gave up his body exclaiming, ' Deer ! Deer ! ' and was born as a deer in his next life. But if a man dies thinking of God, then he attains God, and he does not have to come back to the life of this world."

A BRAHMO DEVOTEE : " Sir, suppose a man has thought of God at other times during his life, but at the time of his death forgets Him. Would he,

on that account, come back to this world of sorrow and suffering ? Why should it be so ? He certainly thought of God some time during his life."

MASTER : " A man thinks of God, no doubt, but he has no faith in Him. Again and again he forgets God and becomes attached to the world. It is like giving the elephant a bath ; afterwards he covers his body with mud and dirt again. 'The mind is a mad elephant.' But if you can make the elephant go into the stable immediately after bathing him, then he stays clean. Just so, if a man thinks of God in the hour of death, then his mind becomes pure and it gets no more opportunity to become attached to 'woman and gold'.

"Man has no faith in God. That is the reason he suffers so much. They say that when you plunge into the holy waters of the Ganges your sins perch on a tree on the bank. No sooner do you come out of the water after the bath than the sins jump back on your shoulders. (*All laugh.*) A man must prepare the way beforehand, so that he may think of God in the hour of death. The way lies through constant practice. If a man practises meditation on God, he will remember God even on the last day of his life."

BRAHMO DEVOTEE : " You have spoken very beautifully, sir. Beautiful words, indeed."

MASTER : " Oh, this is just idle talk. But do you know my inner feeling ? I am the machine and God is the Operator. I am the house and He is the Indweller. I am the engine and He is the Engineer. I am the chariot and He is the Charioteer. I move as He moves me ; I do as He makes me do."

Presently Trailokya began to sing to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. Sri Ramakrishna danced, intoxicated with divine love. Many times he went into samadhi. He stood still, his eyes fixed, his face beaming, with one hand on the shoulder of a beloved disciple. Coming down a little from the state of ecstasy, he danced again like a mad elephant. Regaining consciousness of the outer world, he improvised lines to the music :

O Mother, dance about Thy devotees !  
Dance Thyself and make them dance as well.  
O Mother, dance in the lotus of my heart ;  
Dance, O Thou the ever blessed Brahman !  
Dance in all Thy world-bewitching beauty.

An indescribable scene. The exquisite and celestial dance of a child completely filled with ecstatic love of God and identified heart and soul with the Divine Mother ! The Brahmo devotees danced around the Master again and again, attracted like iron to a magnet. In ecstatic voices they chanted the name of Brahman. Again, they chanted the name of the Divine Mother. Many of them wept like children, crying, " Mother ! Mother ! "

When the music was over, the devotees and the Master sat down. Although it was about eight o'clock, the evening worship of the Brahmo Samaj had not yet begun. In the joy of this divine music they had forgotten all about their formal worship. Vijay, who was to conduct the evening service, sat facing the Master. His mother-in-law and the other Brahmo ladies wanted to see Sri Ramakrishna ; so the Master went to meet them in another room.



After a time the Master came back and said to Vijay : " What devotion to God your mother-in-law has ! About the worldly life she said to me : ' Oh, you needn't tell me about the world. No sooner does one wave disappear than another rises up.' ' But ', I said, ' what is that to you ? You have knowledge.' She replied : ' Where is my knowledge ? I haven't yet been able to go beyond vidyamaya and avidyamaya. It won't help me much to go beyond just the illusion of ignorance ; I shall have to transcend the illusion of knowledge as well. Only then shall I have true knowledge of God. I am quoting your own words.' "

While they were talking, Beni Pal, their host, entered the room.

BENI (*to Vijay*) : " Sir, please get up. It is already late. Please begin the worship. "

VIJAY : " What further need is there of worship ? I find that according to your arrangement the rice pudding is served first, and then the soup and other dishes. "

MASTER (*with a smile*) : " The devotees provide offerings according to their temperaments. The sattvic devotee offers the Deity simple rice pudding, and the rajasic devotee, fifty different dishes. The tamasic devotee slaughters goats and other animals. "

Vijay began to hesitate about going to the platform to conduct the worship. He said to the Master, " I shall conduct the worship from the platform only if you give me your blessing. "

MASTER : " It will be all right if you don't feel any egotism, if you don't have the vain feeling : ' I am giving a lecture. Listen to me.' What begets egotism ? Knowledge or ignorance ? It is only the humble man who attains Knowledge. In a low place rain-water collects. It runs down from a mound. "

" A man achieves neither Knowledge nor liberation as long as he has egotism. He comes back again and again to the world. The calf bellows, ' Hamba ! Hamba ! ', that is ' I ! I ! ' That is why it suffers such agony. The butcher slaughters it and the shoe-maker makes shoes from its hide. Besides, its hide is used for the drum, which is beaten mercilessly. Still no end to its misery ! At long last a carding-machine is made from its entrails. While carding the cotton the machine makes the sound ' Tuhu ! Tuhu ! ', that is, ' Thou ! Thou ! ' Then the poor calf is released from all suffering. It no longer says, ' Hamba ! Hamba ! ' but repeats, ' Tuhu ! Tuhu ! ' The calf says, as it were : ' O God, Thou art the Doer and I am nothing. Thou art the Operator and I am the machine. Thou art everything. "

" Three words—' master ', ' teacher ', and ' father '—prick me like thorns. I am the son of God, His eternal child. How can I be a ' father ' ? God alone is the Master and I am His instrument. He is the Operator and I am the machine. "

" If somebody addresses me as guru, I say to him : ' Go away, you fool ! How can I be a teacher ? ' There is no teacher except Satchidananda. There is no refuge except Him. He alone is the Ferryman to take one across the ocean of the world. (*To Vijay*) It is very difficult to act as an acharya. It harms the acharya himself. Finding a number of men doing him reverence, he sits

erect, crossing his legs, and says proudly : 'I am preaching. Hear ye all !' This is a very bad attitude. He gets a little prestige and it ends there. People will say at most : 'Ah ! Vijay Babu has spoken very well. He knows a great deal.' Never cherish the attitude, 'I am preaching.' I always say to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother ! Thou art the Operator and I am the machine. I do as Thou makest me do, I speak as Thou makest me speak.'"

VIJAY (*humbly*) : "Please give me your permission. Only then will I sit on the platform."

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "What shall I say ? Pray to God yourself. He belongs to all, even as 'Uncle Moon' is the uncle of all children. You have nothing to fear if you are sincere."

On being further requested by Vijay, the Master said : "Yes, go. Follow the rules. Everything is all right if one has sincere love for God."

Vijay sat on the platform and conducted the worship according to the rules of the Brahmo Samaj. At the time for prayer he repeatedly called on the Mother, touching the hearts of all. After the worship their host entertained the Master and the devotees with a sumptuous feast.

Soon they were ready to return home. Sri Ramakrishna became engaged in conversation with Vijay, no one else but M. being present.

MASTER : "You prayed to God, addressing Him as Mother. That is very good. People say that the mother's attachment to the child is stronger than the father's. A son can force his demand on his mother but not on his father. Once cartloads of money were coming from the estate of Trailokya's mother. They were guarded by many red-turbaned stalwarts armed with big sticks. Trailokya, who had been waiting on the road with his men, pounced upon the money and took it away by force. A son has a very strong claim on his mother's wealth. People say that a mother cannot very well sue her son in a court of law."

VIJAY : "If Brahman is our Mother, then has It any form or is It formless ?"

MASTER : "That which is Brahman is also Kali, the Mother, the Primal Energy. When inactive It is called Brahman. Again, when creating, preserving, and destroying, It is called Sakti. Still water is an illustration of Brahman. The same water, moving in waves, may be compared to Sakti, Kali. What is the meaning of Kali ? She who communes with Maha-Kala, the Absolute, is Kali. She is formless and, again, She has forms. If you believe in the formless aspect, then meditate on Kali as that. If you meditate on any aspect of Her with firm conviction, She will let you know Her true nature. Then you will realize that not merely does God exist, but He will come near you and talk to you as I am talking to you. Have faith and you will achieve everything. Remember this, too. If you believe that God is formless, then stick to that belief with firm conviction. But don't be dogmatic : never say emphatically about God that He can be only this and not that. You may say : 'I believe that God is formless. But He can be many things more. He alone knows

<sup>1</sup> In the folk-lore of Bengal the moon is often pointed out to the children as their maternal uncle.

what else He can be. I do not know ; I do not understand.' How can man with his one ounce of intelligence know the real nature of God ? Can you put four seers of milk in a one-seer jar ? If God, through His grace, ever reveals Himself to His devotee and makes him understand, then he will know ; but not otherwise.

"That which is Brahman is Sakti, and That, again, is the Mother.

He it is, says Ramprasad, that I approach as Mother ;  
But must I give away the secret, here in the market-place ?  
From the hints I have given, O mind, guess what that Being is !

Ramprasad implies that he has known the truth of Brahman. He addresses Brahman as Mother.

"In another song Ramprasad expresses the same idea thus :

Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman,  
I have discarded, once for all, both dharma and adharma.

Adharma means unrighteous actions, actions forbidden by religion. Dharma means the pious actions prescribed by religion, as, for instance, charity to the poor, feeding the brahmins, and so on."

VUAY : "What remains if one renounces both dharma and adharma ?"

MASTER : "Pure love of God. I prayed to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother, here, take Thy dharma ; here, take Thy adharma ; and give me pure love for Thee. Here, take Thy virtue ; here, take Thy vice ; and give me pure love for Thee. Here, take Thy knowledge ; here, take Thy ignorance ; and give me pure love for Thee.' You see, I didn't ask even for knowledge or public recognition. When one renounces both dharma and adharma, there remains only pure love of God—love that is stainless, motiveless, and that one feels only for the sake of love."

A BRAHMO DEVOTEE : "Is God different from His Sakti ?"

MASTER : "After attaining Perfect Knowledge one realizes that they are not different. They are the same, like the gem and its brilliance. Thinking of the gem, one cannot but think of its brilliance. Again, they are like milk and its whiteness. Thinking of the one, you must also think of the other. But you cannot realize this non-duality before the attainment of Perfect Knowledge. Attaining Perfect Knowledge, one goes into samadhi, beyond the twenty-four cosmic principles. Therefore the principle of 'I' does not exist in that stage. A man cannot describe in words what he feels in samadhi. Coming down, he can give just a hint about it. I come down a hundred cubits, as it were, when I say 'Om' after samadhi. Brahman is beyond the injunctions of the Vedas and cannot be described. There neither 'I' nor 'you' exists.

"As long as a man is conscious of 'I' and 'you', and as long as he feels that it is he who prays or meditates, so long will he feel that God is listening to his prayer and that God is a Person. Then he must say : 'O God, Thou art the Master and I am Thy servant. Thou art the whole and I am a part of Thee. Thou art the Mother and I am Thy child.' At that time there exists a feeling of difference : 'I am one and Thou art another.' It is God Himself who makes us feel this difference ; and on account of this difference one sees

man and woman, light and darkness, and so on. As long as one is aware of this difference, one must accept Sakti, the Personal God. It is God who has put 'I-consciousness' in us. You may reason a thousand times ; still this 'I' does not disappear. As long as 'I-consciousness' exists God reveals Himself to us as a Person.

"Therefore, as long as a man is conscious of 'I' and of differentiation, he cannot speak of the attributeless Brahman and must accept Brahman with attributes. This Brahman with attributes has been declared in the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantra, to be Kali, the Primal Energy."

VIJAY : "How, sir, can one have the vision of the Primal Energy and attain Brahmajnana, the Knowledge of the attributeless Brahman ?"

MASTER : "Pray to Him with a yearning heart, and weep. That will purify your heart. You see the reflection of the sun in clear water. In the mirror of his 'I-consciousness' the devotee sees the form of the Primal Energy, Brahman with attributes. But the mirror must be wiped clean. One does not see the right reflection if there is any dirt on the mirror.

"As long as a man must see the Sun in the water of his 'I-consciousness' and has no other means of seeing It, as long as he has no means of seeing the real Sun except through Its reflection, so long is the reflected sun alone one hundred per cent real to him. As long as the 'I' is real, so long is the reflected sun real—one hundred per cent real. That reflected sun is nothing but the Primal Energy.

"But if you seek Brahmajnana, the Knowledge of the attributeless Brahman, then proceed to the real Sun through Its reflection. Pray to Brahman with attributes, who listens to your prayers, and He Himself will give you full Knowledge of Brahman ; for that which is Brahman with attributes is verily Brahman without attributes, that which is Brahman is verily Sakti. One realizes this non-duality after the attainment of Perfect Knowledge.

"The Divine Mother gives Her devotee Brahmajnana too. But a true lover of God generally does not seek the Knowledge of Brahman.

"There is another path, the path of knowledge, which is very difficult. You members of the Brahmo Samaj are not jnanis. You are bhaktas. The jnani believes that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory as a dream. To him, 'I' and 'you' are illusory as a dream.

"God is our Inner Controller. Pray to Him with a pure and guileless heart. He will explain everything to you. • Give up egotism and take refuge in Him. You will realize everything."

The Master sang :

Dwell, O mind, within yourself ;  
Enter no other's home.  
If you but seek there, you will find  
All you are searching for.

God, the true Philosopher's Stone,  
Who answers every prayer,  
Lies hidden deep within your heart,  
The richest gem of all.



How many pearls and precious stones  
Are scattered all about  
The outer court that lies before  
The chamber of your heart !

He continued : " When you mix with people outside your Samaj, love them all. When in their company be one of them. Don't harbour malice toward them. Don't turn up your nose in hatred and say : ' Oh, this man believes in God with form and not in the formless God. That man believes in the formless God and not in God with form. This man is a Christian. This man is a Hindu. And this man is a Mussalman.' It is God alone who makes people see things in different ways. Know that people have different natures. Realize this and mix with them as much as you can. And love all. But enter your own inner chamber to enjoy peace and bliss.

Lighting the lamp of Knowledge in the chamber of you heart,  
Behold the face of the Mother, Brahman's Embodiment.

You can see your true Self only within your own chamber. The cowherds take the cows to graze in the pasture. There the cattle mix. They all form one herd. But on returning to their sheds in the evening they are separated. Then each stays by itself in its own stall. Therefore I say, dwell by yourself in your own chamber."

It was ten o'clock in the evening. The Master got into a carriage to return to Dakshineswar. One or two attending devotees got in with him. The carriage stood under a tree, in deep darkness. Beni Pal wanted to send some sweets and other food with Sri Ramakrishna for Ramlal, the Master's nephew.

BENI PAL : " Sir, Ramlal was not here this evening. With your permission I should like to send some sweets for him by your attendants."

MASTER (*with great anxiety*) : " Oh, Beni Pal ! Oh, sir ! Please don't send these things with me. That will do me harm. It is never possible for me to lay up anything. I hope you won't mind."

BENI PAL : " As you please, sir. Please give me your blessing."

MASTER : " Oh, we have been very happy today ! You see, he alone is a true man who has made money his servant. But those who do not know the use of money are not men even though they have human forms. They may have human bodies, but they behave like animals. You are blessed indeed. You have made so many devotees happy today."

*Monday, October 20, 1884*

Two days after the worship of Kali, the Marwaris of the Burrabazar section of Calcutta were celebrating the Annakuta<sup>2</sup> festival. Sri Ramakrishna had been invited by the Marwari devotees to the ceremony at 12 Mallick Street. It was the second day of the bright fortnight of the moon. The festival connected with the worship of Kali, known as the " Festival of Light ", was still going on at Burrabazar.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, " hill of food ". During this festival a vast quantity of cooked food is offered to the Deity and later distributed among the devotees and the poor.

About three o'clock in the afternoon M. and the younger Gopal came to Burrabazar. M. had in his hand a bundle of cloths he had purchased for Sri Ramakrishna. Mallick Street was jammed with people, bullock-carts, and carriages. As M. and Gopal approached 12 Mallick Street they noticed Sri Ramakrishna in a carriage, which could hardly move because of the jam. Baburam and Ram Chakravarty were with the Master. He smiled at M. and Gopal.

Sri Ramakrishna alighted from the carriage. With Baburam he proceeded on foot to the house of his host, M. leading the way. They saw the courtyard of the house filled with big bales of clothes which were being loaded into bullock-carts for shipment. The Marwari host greeted the Master and led him to the third floor of the house. A painting of Kali hung on the wall. Sri Ramakrishna bowed before it. He sat down and became engaged in conversation with the devotees. One of the Marwaris began to stroke his feet. The Master asked him to stop. After reflecting a minute he said, "All right, you can stroke them a little." His words were full of compassion.

MASTER (*to M.*): "What about your school?"

M: "Today is a holiday, sir."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Tomorrow there will be a musical recital of the *Chandi* at Adhar's house."

The host sent a pundit to Sri Ramakrishna. He saluted the Master and took a seat. Soon they were engaged in conversation. They talked about spiritual things.

MASTER: "God incarnates Himself for the bhakta and not for the jnani."

PUNDIT: "'I incarnate Myself in every age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma.'" God becomes man, first, for the joy of the bhakta, and secondly, for the destruction of the wicked. The jnani has no desire."

MASTER (*smiling*): "But I have not got rid of all desires. I have the desire for love of God."

The pundit's son entered the room. He saluted the Master and took a seat.

MASTER (*to the pundit*): "Well, what is bhava and what is bhakti?"

PUNDIT: "Meditation on God mellows the mind. This mellowness is called bhava. It is like the thawing of ice when the sun rises."

MASTER: "Well, what is prema?"

The pundit and Sri Ramakrishna were talking in Hindusthani. The former gave some sort of explanation of prema.

MASTER (*to the pundit*): "No! No! That is not the meaning. Prema means such love for God that it makes a man forget the world and also his body, which is so dear to him. Chaitanyadeva had prema."

PUNDIT: "Yes, sir. One behaves like a drunkard."

MASTER: "Some people develop bhakti and others do not; how do you explain that, sir?"

PUNDIT : "There is no partiality in God. He is the Wish-fulfilling Tree. Whatever a man asks of God he gets. But he must go near the Tree to ask the boon."

The pundit said all this in Hindusthani. The Master explained it to M. in Bengali.

MASTER : "Sir, please describe samadhi to us."

PUNDIT : "There are two kinds of samadhi : savikalpa and nirvikalpa. In nirvikalpa samadhi the functioning of the mind stops altogether."

MASTER : "Yes, 'The mind completely takes the form of Reality.' The distinction between the meditator and the object of meditation does not exist. There are two other kinds of samadhi : chetana and jada. Narada and Sukadeva attained chetana samadhi. Isn't that true, sir ?"

PUNDIT : "Yes, sir, that is so."

MASTER : "Further, there are the unmana samadhi and the sthita samadhi. Isn't that true, sir ?"

The pundit remained silent. He did not venture an opinion.

MASTER : "Well, sir, through the practice of japa and austerity one can get occult powers, such as walking on the water of the Ganges. Isn't that true ?"

PUNDIT : "Yes, one can. But a devotee doesn't want them."

The conversation continued for some time. The pundit said he would visit the Master at Dakshineswar the next ekadasi day.

MASTER : "Ah ! Your boy is very nice."

PUNDIT : "Well, revered sir, all this is transitory. It is like the waves in a river—one goes down and another comes up."

MASTER : "You have substance in you."

After a few minutes the pundit saluted Sri Ramakrishna. He said : "I shall have to perform my daily devotions. Please let me go."

MASTER : "Oh, Sit down ! Sit down !"

The pundit sat down again. The conversation turned to hathayoga. The pundit discussed the subject with the Master in Hindusthani. Sri Ramakrishna said : "Yes that is also a form of austerity. But the hathayogi identifies himself with his body. His mind dwells on his body alone." The pundit took leave of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna conversed with the pundit's son.

MASTER : "One can understand the *Bhagavata* well if one has already studied the Nyaya, the Vedanta, and the other systems of philosophy. Isn't that so ?"

PUNDIT'S SON : "Yes, sir. It is very necessary to study the Samkhya philosophy."

The conversation went on. Sri Ramakrishna was leaning against a big pillow ; the devotees were sitting on the floor. Lying in that position, the Master began to sing :

Brother, joyfully cling to God ;  
Thus striving, some day you may attain Him.

Their host entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. He was a pious man and devoted to the Master. The pundit's son was still there. The

Master asked if the *Panini*, the Sanskrit grammar, was taught in the schools. He further asked about the Nyaya and the Vedanta philosophies. The host did not show much interest in the discussion and changed the subject.

HOST : "Revered sir, what is the way for us ?"

MASTER : "Chanting the name and glories of God, living in the company of holy men, and earnestly praying to God."

HOST : "Please bless me, sir, that I may pay less and less attention to worldly things."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "How much attention do you give to the world ? Fifty per cent ?" (*Laughter.*)

HOST : "You know that, sir. We cannot achieve anything without the grace of a holy person like yourself."

MASTER : "If you please God, everyone will be pleased. It is God alone that exists in the heart of the holy man."

HOST : "Nothing, of course, remains unrealized when one attains God. If a man attains God, he can give up everything else. If a man gets a rupee, he gives up the joy of a penny."

MASTER : "A little spiritual discipline is necessary. Through the practice of discipline one gradually obtains divine joy. Suppose a jar with money inside is hidden deep under the earth and someone wants to possess it. In that case he must take the trouble of digging for it. As he digs, he perspires. After much digging the spade strikes the metal jar. He feels a thrill at the sound. The more sound the spade makes, striking against the jar, the more joy he feels."

"Pray to Rama. Meditate on Him. He will certainly provide you with everything."

HOST : "Revered sir, you are Rama Himself."

MASTER : "How is that ? The waves belong to the river ; does the river belong to the waves ?"

HOST : "Rama dwells only in the hearts of holy men. He cannot be seen in any other way. There is no incarnation of God at the present time."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "How do you know there is no Divine Incarnation ?"

The host remained silent.

MASTER : "All cannot recognize an Incarnation. When Narada visited Rama, Rama prostrated Himself before Narada and said : 'We are worldly creatures. How can we be sanctified unless holy men like you visit us ?' Further, Rama went into exile in the forest to redeem His father's pledges. He saw that, since hearing of His exile, the rishis of the forest had been fasting. Many of them did not know that Rama was none other than the Supreme Brahman."

HOST : "You too are that same Rama."

MASTER : "For heaven's sake ! Never say that."

As Sri Ramakrishna spoke these words, he bowed down to the host and said, with folded hands : "'That Rama dwells in all beings ; He exists everywhere in the universe.' I am your servant. It is Rama Himself who has become all men, animals, and other living beings."



HOST : " But sir, we do not know that."

MASTER : " Whether you know it or not, you are Rama."

HOST : " You are free from love and hatred."

MASTER : " How so ? I engaged a carriage to bring me to Calcutta and advanced the coachman three annas. But he didn't turn up. I became very angry with him. He is a very wicked man. He made me suffer a lot."

Sri Ramakrishna was resting. The Marwari devotees had been singing bhajan on the roof. They were celebrating the Krishna festival. Arrangements had been made for worship and food offering. At the host's request the Master went to see the image. He bowed down before the Deity.

Sri Ramakrishna was profoundly moved as he stood before the image. With folded hands he said : " O Govinda, Thou art my soul ! Thou art my life ! Victory to Govinda ! Hallowed be the name of Govinda ! Thou art the Embodiment of Satchidananda ! Oh, Krishna ! Ah, Krishna ! Krishna is knowledge. Krishna is mind. Krishna is life. Krishna is soul. Krishna is body. Krishna is caste. Krishna is family. O Govinda, my life and soul ! " Uttering these words, Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. He remained standing. Ram Chatterji supported him.

After a long time the Master regained consciousness of the world. The Marwari devotees were about to take out the image. The offering of food was to take place outside the room. The Master joined the procession of devotees. The food was offered with arati and music. Sri Ramakrishna fanned the image.

Then began the ceremony of feeding the brahmins. They were seated on the roof. The Master and his devotees also partook of the prasad.

Sri Ramakrishna took leave of the host. It was evening and the street was jammed as before with people and vehicles. He said : " Let us get out of the carriage. It can go by a back street." Proceeding on foot, he found that a betel-leaf seller had opened his stall in front of a small room that looked like a hole. One could not possibly enter it without bending one's head. The Master said : " How painful it is to be shut in such a small space ! That is the way of worldly people. And they are happy in such a life."

The carriage came up after making the detour. The Master entered it with Baburam, M., and Ram Chatterji. The younger Gopal sat on the roof of the carriage.

A beggar woman with a baby on her arm stood in front of the carriage waiting for alms. The Master said to M., " Have you any money ? " Gopal gave her something.

The carriage rolled along Burrabazar. Everywhere there were signs of great festivity. The night was dark but illuminated with myriads of lights. The carriage came to the Chitpur road, which was also brightly lighted. The people moved in lines like ants. The crowd looked at the gaily decorated stores and stalls on both sides of the road. There were sweetmeat stores and perfume stalls. Pictures, beautiful and gaudy, hung from the walls. Well-dressed shopkeepers sprayed the visitors with rose-water. The carriage stopped in front of a perfume stall. The Master looked at the pictures and lights and

felt happy as a child. People were talking loudly. He cried out : " Go forward ! Move on ! " He laughed. He said to Baburam with a loud laugh : " Move on ! What are you doing ? " The devotees laughed too. They understood that the Master wanted them to move forward to God and not to be satisfied with their present state.

The carriage drove on. The Master noticed that M. had brought some cloth for him. M. had with him two pieces of unbleached and two pieces of washed cloth. But the Master had asked him only for the unbleached ones. He said to M. : " Give me the unbleached ones. You may keep the others. All right. You may give me one of them."

M : " Then shall I take back one piece ? "

MASTER : " Then take both."

M : " As you please, sir."

MASTER : " You can give me those when I need them. You see, yesterday Beni Pal wanted me to carry away some food for Ramlal. I told him I couldn't. It is impossible for me to lay up for the future."

M : " That's all right, sir. I shall take back the two pieces of washed cloth."

MASTER (*tenderly*) : " Don't you see, if any desire arises in my mind, it is for the good of you all ? You are my own. I shall tell you if I need anything."

M. (*humbly*) : " Yes, sir."

Referring to a devotee, Sri Ramakrishna said : " I said to him yesterday, ' Tomorrow I shall go to Burrabazar ; please meet me there.' Do you know what he said ? He said : ' The tram fare will be one anna. Where shall I get it ? ' He had been to Beni Pal's garden yesterday and had officiated there as priest. No one had asked him to do it. He had put on the show himself. He wanted people to know that he was a member of the Brahmo Samaj. (*To M.*) Can you tell me what he meant when he said that the tram would cost him one anna ? "

The conversation turned to the Annakuta festival of the Marwaris.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " What you have seen here one sees at Vrindavan too. Rakhal has been seeing the same thing there. But the mound of food at Vrindavan is higher, and more people gather there. There you also see the Govardhan hill. That's the only difference.

" Did you notice the Marwaris' devotion ? That is the real Hindu ideal. That is the Sanatana Dharma. Did you notice their joy when they carried the image in procession ? They were happy to think that they bore the throne of God on their shoulders.

" The Hindu religion alone is the Sanatana Dharma. The various creeds you hear of nowadays have come into existence through the will of God and will disappear again through His will. They will not last forever. Therefore I say, ' I bow down at the feet of even the modern devotees.' The Hindu religion has always existed and will always exist."

M. was going home. He saluted the Master and got out of the carriage near Sobhabazar. Sri Ramakrishna proceeded to Dakshineswar in a happy mood.

## XXXIII

### WITH VARIOUS DEVOTEES

*Sunday, October 26, 1884*

IT WAS AFTERNOON, and many devotees were present in the Master's room. Among them were Manomohan, Mahimacharan, and M. They were joined later by Ishan and Hazra. Balaram and Rakhal were still staying at Vrindavan. The many young boys who at this time began to seek the Master's company later became his intimate disciples. Latu lived with the Master, and Jogin,<sup>1</sup> who lived in the village, was a frequent visitor.

Sri Ramakrishna, happy child of the Divine Mother that he was, radiated a joy and peace that were reflected in the hearts of his devotees and found expression in their happy faces. They were seated on the floor and had their eyes fixed on the Master, who was standing in a pensive mood, like a boy.

MASTER (*to Manomohan*): "I see Rama in all things. You are all sitting here, but I see only Rama in every one of you."

MANOMOHAN: "Yes, sir. It is Rama who has become everything. But, as you say, though all water is Narayana, yet some water is fit for drinking, some for washing the hands and face, and some only for cleaning pots and pans."

MASTER: "It is true. But I see that it is God Himself who has become everything—the universe and its living beings."

Presently the Master sat down on the small couch near his bed.

MASTER (*to Mahimacharan*): "There is no question of my being truthful; but must I develop a mania for it? If I once say that I shall not eat, then it is impossible for me to eat, even if I am hungry. Again, if I ask a particular man to take my water-jug to the pine-grove, he alone must carry it. If another man carries it, he will have to take it back. What a fix I am in! Is there no way out of it?"

"Besides, I can't carry anything with me, neither food nor betel-leaf; for that means laying up for the future. I can't carry a little clay in my hand."

Just then a man entered the room and told the Master that Hriday was waiting to see him in Jadu Mallick's garden, near the gate.

The Master said to the devotees: "I shall have to see Hriday. Please don't leave the room." He put on his slippers and went toward the east gate of

<sup>1</sup> A monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, later known as Swami Yogananda.

the temple garden, M. accompanying him. The road through the garden was covered with red brick-dust. The manager of the temple, who was standing on the road, saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The Master passed the north entrance of the temple compound, where the bearded sentries sat. On his left he passed the kuthi, the building used by the proprietors of the temple. Then he walked on down the road, which was lined on both sides with flowering trees, passing the reservoir on his right, and went outside the temple garden. He found Hriday waiting for him near the gate of Jadu Mallick's garden.

At the sight of the Master, Hriday, who had been standing there with folded hands, prostrated himself before him. When the Master told him to get up, he rose and began to cry like a child. How strange ! Teatra also appeared in the Master's eyes. He wiped them away with his hands. Hriday had made him suffer endless agonies, yet the Master wept for him.

MASTER : " Why are you here now ? "

HRIDAY (*weeping*) : " I have come to see you. To whom else shall I tell my sorrows ? "

Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said to him by way of consolation : " One cannot avoid such sorrows in the world. Pleasure and pain are inevitable in worldly life. (*Pointing to M.*) That is why they come here now and then. They get peace of mind by hearing about God. What is your trouble ? "

HRIDAY (*weeping*) : " I am deprived of your company and so I suffer. "

MASTER : " Why, was it not you who said to me, ' You follow your ideal and let me follow mine ' ? "

HRIDAY : " Yes, I did say that. But what did I know ? "

MASTER : " I shall say good-bye to you now. Come another day and we shall talk together. Today is Sunday and many people have come to see me. They are waiting in my room. Have you had a good crop in the country ? "

HRIDAY : " It isn't bad. "

MASTER : " Let me say good-bye. Come another day. "

Hriday again prostrated himself before the Master, who started back to his room with M.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " He tormented me as much as he served me. When my stomach trouble had reduced my body to a couple of bones and I couldn't eat anything, he said to me one day : ' Look at me—how well I eat ! You've just taken a fancy that you can't eat. ' Again he said : ' You are a fool ! If I weren't living with you, where would your profession of holiness be ? ' One day he tormented me so much that I stood on the embankment ready to give up my body by jumping into the Ganges, which was then at flood-tide. "

M. became speechless at these words of the Master. For such a man he had shed tears a few minutes before !

MASTER (*to M.*) : " Well, he served me a great deal ; then why should he have fallen on such evil days ? He took care of me like a parent bringing up a child. As for me, I would remain unconscious of the world day and night. Besides, I was ill for a long time. I was completely at his mercy. "

M. did not know how to answer Sri Ramakrishna ; so he kept silent.



Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room and sat on the small couch. The devotees had been waiting for him eagerly. Several devotees from Konnagar had arrived. One of them came forward to question the Master.

DEVOTEE : "Sir, we hear that you go into samadhi and experience ecstasy. Please explain why and how you get into that mood."

MASTER : "Sri Radha used to experience mahabhava. If any of her companions wanted to touch her while she was in that state, another of them would say : 'Please do not touch that body, the playground of Sri Krishna. Krishna is now sporting in her body.' It is not possible to experience bhava or mahabhava without the realization of God. When a fish comes up from a great depth, you see a movement on the surface of the water ; and if it is a big one there is much splashing about. That is why a devotee 'laughs and weeps and dances and sings in the ecstasy of God'.

"One cannot remain in bhava very long. People take a man to be crazy if he sits before a mirror and looks at his face all the time."

DEVOTEE : "Sir, we hear that you see God. If you do, please show Him to us."

MASTER : "Everything depends on God's will. What can a man do ? While chanting God's name, sometimes tears flow and at other times the eyes remain dry. While meditating on God, some days I feel a great deal of inner awakening, and some days I feel nothing.

"A man must work. Only then can he see God. One day, in an exalted mood, I had a vision of the Haldarpukur. I saw a low-caste villager drawing water after pushing aside the green scum. Now and then he took up the water in the palm of his hand and examined it. In that vision it was revealed to me that the water cannot be seen without pushing aside the green scum that covers it ; that is to say, one cannot develop love of God or obtain His vision without work. Work means meditation, japa, and the like. The chanting of God's name and glories is work too. You may also include charity, sacrifice, and so on.

"If you want butter, you must let the milk turn to curd. It must be left in a quiet place. When the milk becomes curd, you must work hard to churn it. Only then can you get butter from the milk."

MAHIMACHARAN : "That is true, sir. Work is certainly necessary. One must labour hard. Only then does one succeed, There is so much to read ! The scriptures are endless."

MASTER (to Mahimacharan) : "How much of the scriptures can you read ? What will you gain by mere reasoning ? Try to realize God before anything else. Have faith in the guru's words, and work. If you have no guru, then pray to God with a longing heart. He will let you know what He is like.

"What will you learn of God from books ? As long as you are at a distance from the market-place you hear only an indistinct roar. But it is quite different when you are actually there. Then you hear and see everything distinctly. You hear people saying : 'Here are your potatoes. Take them and give me the money.'

"From a distance you hear only the rumbling noise of the ocean. Go near it and you will see many boats sailing about, birds flying, and waves rolling.

"One cannot get true feeling about God from the study of books. This feeling is something very different from book-learning. Books, scriptures, and science appear as mere dirt and straw after the realization of God.

"The one thing needful is to be introduced to the master of the house. Why are you so anxious to know beforehand how many houses and gardens, and how many government securities, the master possesses? The servants of the house would not allow you even to approach these, and they would certainly not tell you about their master's investments. Therefore, somehow or other become acquainted with the master, even if you have to jump over the fence or take a few pushes from the servants. Then the master himself will tell you all about his houses and gardens and his government securities. And what is more, the servants and the door-keeper will salute you when you are known to the master." (*All laugh.*)

DEVOTEE: "Now the question is how to become acquainted with the master." (*Laughter.*)

MASTER: "That is why I say that work is necessary. It will not do to say that God exists and then idle away your time. You must reach God somehow or other. Call on Him in solitude and pray to Him, 'O Lord! reveal Thyself to me.' Weep for Him with a longing heart. You roam about in search of 'woman and gold' like a madman; now be a little mad for God. Let people say, 'This man has lost his head for God.' Why not renounce everything for a few days and call on God in solitude?"

"What will you achieve by simply saying that God exists and doing nothing about it? There are big fish in the Haldarpukur; but can you catch them by merely sitting idly on the bank? Prepare some spiced bait and throw it into the lake. Then the fish will come from the deep water and you will see ripples. That will make you happy. Perhaps a fish will jump with a splash and you will get a glimpse of it. Then you will be so glad!"

"Milk must be turned to curd and the curd must be churned. Only then will you get butter. (*To Mahima*) What a nuisance! Someone must show God to a man, while he himself sits idly by all the while! Someone must extract the butter and hold it in front of his mouth! (*All laugh.*) What a bother! Someone else must catch the fish and give it to him!"

"A man wanted to see the king. The king lived in the inner court of the palace, beyond seven gates. No sooner did the man pass the first gate than he exclaimed, 'Oh, where is the king?' But there were seven gates, and he must pass them one after another before he could see the king."

MAHIMACHARAN: "By what kind of work can one realize God?"

MASTER: "It is not that God can be realized by this work and not by that. The vision of God depends on His grace. Still a man must work a little with longing for God in his heart. If he has longing he will receive the grace of God.

"To attain God a man must have certain favourable conditions: the company of holy men, discrimination, and the blessings of a real teacher.

Perhaps his elder brother takes the responsibility for the family ; perhaps his wife has spiritual qualities and is very virtuous ; perhaps he is not married at all or entangled in worldly life. He succeeds when conditions like these are fulfilled.

" In a certain family a man lay seriously ill. He was at the point of death. Someone said : ' Here is a remedy : First it must rain when the star Svati is in the ascendant : then some of that rain-water must collect in a human skull ; then a frog must come there and a snake must chase it ; and as the frog is about to be bitten by the snake, it must jump away and the poison of the snake must drop into the skull. You must prepare a medicine from this poison and give it to the patient. Then he will live.' The head of the family consulted the almanac about the star and set out at the right moment. With great longing of heart he began to search for the different ingredients. He prayed to God, ' O Lord, I shall succeed only if You bring together all the ingredients.' As he was roaming about he actually saw a skull lying on the ground. Presently there came a shower of rain. Then the man exclaimed : ' O gracious Lord, I have got the rain-water under Svati, and the skull too. What is more, some of the rain has fallen into the skull. Now be kind enough to bring together the other ingredients.' He was reflecting with a yearning heart when he saw a poisonous snake approaching. His joy knew no bounds. He became so excited that he could feel the thumping of his own heart. ' O God,' he prayed, ' now the snake has come too. I have procured most of the ingredients. Please be gracious and give me the remaining ones.' No sooner did he pray thus than a frog hopped up. The snake pursued it. As they came near the skull and the snake was about to bite the frog, the frog jumped over the skull and the snake's poison fell into it. The man began to dance, clapping his hands for joy.—So I say that one gets everything through yearning.

" A man cannot realize God unless he renounces everything mentally. A sadhu cannot lay things up. ' Birds and wandering monks do not make provision for the morrow.' Such is the state of my mind that I cannot carry even clay in my hand. Once, when Hriday tormented me, I thought of leaving this place and going to Benares. I thought of taking some clothes with me. But how could I take money ? So I could not go to Benares. (*All laugh.*)

(*To Mahima*) " You are a householder. Therefore you should hold both to ' this ' and to ' that '—both to the world and to God."

MAHIMA : " Sir, can one who holds to ' that ' also hold to ' this ' ? "

MASTER : " Once, sitting on the bank of the Ganges near the Panchavati, holding a rupee in one hand and clay in the other, I discriminated, ' The rupee is the clay—the clay is verily the rupee, and the rupee is verily the clay ', and then threw the rupee into the river. But I was a little frightened. ' How foolish of me to offend the goddess of fortune ! ' I thought. ' What shall I do if she doesn't provide me with food any more ? ' Then, like Hazra, I sought help in a ruse. I said to the goddess, ' Mother, may you dwell in my heart.' Once the Divine Mother was pleased with a man's austerities and said to him, ' You may ask a favour of Me.' ' O Mother,' said he, ' if You are so pleased with me, then grant that I may eat from a gold plate with my grandchildren,

Now, in one boon the man got everything : grandchildren, wealth, and gold plate. (*All laugh.*)

"When the mind is freed from 'woman and gold', it can be directed to God and become absorbed in Him. It is the bound alone who can be freed. The moment the mind turns away from God, it is bound. When does the lower needle of a pair of scales move away from the upper one ? When one pan is pressed down by a weight. 'Woman and gold' is the weight.

"Why does a child cry on coming out of its mother's womb ? With its cry it says, as it were : 'Just see where I am now ! In my mother's womb I was meditating on the Lotus Feet of God ; but see where I am now !'

(*To Mahima*) "You should renounce mentally. Live the life of a householder in a spirit of detachment."

MAHIMA : "Can a man live in the world if his mind is once directed to God ?"

MASTER : "Why not ? Where will he go away from the world ? I realize that wherever I live I am always in the Ayodhya of Rama. This whole world is Rama's Ayodhya. After receiving instruction from His teacher, Rama said that He would renounce the world. Dasaratha sent the sage Vasishtha to Rama to dissuade Him. Vasishtha found Him filled with intense renunciation. He said to Rama : 'First of all, reason with me, Rama ; then You may leave the world. May I ask You if this world is outside God ? If that is so, then You may give it up.' Rama found that it is God alone who has become the universe and all its living beings. Everything in the world appears real on account of God's reality behind it. Thereupon Rama became silent.

"In the world a man must fight against passions like lust and anger, against many desires, against attachment. It is convenient to fight from inside a fort—from his own home. At home he gets his food and other help from his wife. In the Kaliyuga the life of a man depends entirely on food. It is better to get food at one place than to knock at seven doors for it." Living at home is like facing the battle from a fort.

"Live in the world like a cast-off leaf in a gale. Such a leaf is sometimes blown inside a house and sometimes to a rubbish heap. The leaf goes wherever the wind blows—sometimes to a good place and sometimes to a bad. Now God has put you in the world. That is good. Stay here." Again, when He lifts you from here and puts you in a better place, that will be time enough to think about what to do then.

"God has put you in the world. What can you do about it ? Resign everything to Him. Surrender yourself at His feet. Then there will be no more confusion. Then you will realize that it is God who does everything. All depends on 'the will of Rama'."

A DEVOTEE : "What is that story about 'the will of Rama' ?"

MASTER : "In a certain village there lived a weaver. He was a very pious soul. Everyone trusted him and loved him. He used to sell his goods in the market-place. When a customer asked him the price of a piece of cloth, the weaver would say : 'By the will of Rama the price of the yarn is one rupee

<sup>2</sup> It is the custom of monks in India to beg their food from householders.



and the labour four annas ; by the will of Rama the profit is two annas. The price of the cloth, by the will of Rama, is one rupee and six annas.' Such was the people's faith in the weaver that the customer would at once pay the price and take the cloth. The weaver was a real devotee of God. After finishing his supper in the evening, he would spend long hours in the worship hall meditating on God and chanting His name and glories. Now, late one night the weaver couldn't get to sleep. He was sitting in the worship hall, smoking now and then, when a band of robbers happened to pass that way. They wanted a man to carry their goods and said to the weaver, 'Come with us.' So saying, they led him off by the hand. After committing a robbery in a house, they put a load of things on the weaver's head, commanding him to carry them. Suddenly the police arrived and the robbers ran away. But the weaver, with his load, was arrested. He was kept in the lock-up for the night. Next day he was brought before the magistrate for trial. The villagers learnt what had happened and came to court. They said to the magistrate, 'Your Honour, this man could never commit a robbery.' Thereupon the magistrate asked the weaver to make his statement.

"The weaver said : 'Your Honour, by the will of Rama I finished my meal at night. Then by the will of Rama I was sitting in the worship hall. It was quite late at night by the will of Rama. By the will of Rama I had been thinking of God and chanting His name and glories, when by the will of Rama a band of robbers passed that way. By the will of Rama they dragged me with them ; by the will of Rama they committed a robbery in a house ; and by the will of Rama they put a load on my head. Just then, by the will of Rama the police arrived and by the will of Rama I was arrested. Then by the will of Rama the police kept me in the lock-up for the night, and this morning by the will of Rama I have been brought before Your Honour.' The magistrate realized that the weaver was a pious man and ordered his release. On his way home the weaver said to his friends, 'By the will of Rama I have been released.'

"Whether a man should be a householder or a monk depends on the will of Rama. Surrender everything to God and do your duties in the world. What else can you do ? A clerk was once sent to prison. After the prison term was over he was released. Now, what do you think he did ? Cut capers or do his old clerical work ?

"If the householder becomes a jivanmukta, then he can easily live in the world if he likes. A man who has attained Knowledge does not differentiate between 'this place' and 'that place'. All places are the same to him. He who thinks of 'that place' also thinks of 'this place'.

"When I first met Keshab at Jaygopal's garden house, I remarked, 'He is the only one who has dropped his tail.' At this people laughed. Keshab said to them : 'Don't laugh. There must be some meaning in his words. Let us ask him.' Thereupon I said to Keshab : 'The tadpole, so long as it has not dropped its tail, lives only in the water. It cannot move about on dry land. But as soon as it drops its tail it hops out on the bank ; then it can live both on land and in water. Likewise, as long as a man has not dropped his tail of

ignorance, he can live only in the water of the world. But when he drops his tail, that is to say, when he attains the Knowledge of God, then he can roam about as a free soul, or live as a householder if he likes.\*

Mahimacharan and the other devotees remained spellbound, listening to the Master's words.

MASTER : "Once I visited Devendranath Tagore<sup>†</sup> with Mathur Babu. I said to Mathur : 'I have heard that Devendra Tagore thinks of God. I should like to see him.' 'All right,' said Mathur, 'I will take you to him. We were fellow students in the Hindu College and I am very friendly with him.' We went to Devendra's house. Mathur and Devendra had not seen each other for a long time. Devendra said to Mathur : 'You have changed a little. You have grown fat around the stomach.' Mathur said, referring to me : 'He has come to see you. He is always mad about God.' I wanted to see Devendra's physical marks and said to him, 'Let me see your body.' He pulled up his shirt, and I found that he had very fair skin tinted red. His hair had not yet turned grey.

"At the outset I noticed a little vanity in Devendra. And isn't that natural ? He had such wealth, such scholarship, such name and fame ! Noticing that streak of vanity, I asked Mathur : 'Well, is vanity the outcome of knowledge or ignorance ? Can a knower of Brahman have such a feeling as, "I am a scholar ; I am a jnani ; I am rich" ?'

"While I was talking to Devendra, I suddenly got into that state of mind in which I can see a man as he really is. I was convulsed with laughter inside. In that state I regard scholars and the book-learned as mere straw. If I see that a scholar has no discrimination and renunciation, I regard him as worthless straw. I see that he is like a vulture, which soars high but fixes its look on a charnel-pit down below.

"I found that Devendra had combined both yoga and bhoga in his life. He had a number of children, all young. The family physician was there. Thus, you see, though he was a jnani, yet he was preoccupied with worldly life. I said to him : 'You are the King Janaka of this Kaliyuga.

Holding to one as well as the other,  
He drank his milk from a brimming cup !

I have heard that you live in the world and think of God ; so I have come to see you. Please tell me something about God."

"He recited some texts from the Vedas. He said, 'This universe is like a chandelier and each living being is a light in it.' Once, meditating in the Panchavati, I too had had a vision like that. I found his words agreed with my vision, and I thought he must be a very great man. I asked him to explain his words. He said : 'God has created men to manifest His own glory ; otherwise, who could know this universe ? Everything becomes dark without the lights in the chandelier. One cannot even see the chandelier itself.'

"We talked a long time. Devendra was pleased and said to me, 'You must come to our Brahmo Samaj festival.' 'That', I said, 'depends on the will

\* The father of Rabindranath Tagore.

of God. You can see the state of my mind. There's no knowing when God will put me into a particular state.' Devendra insisted : 'No, you must come. But put on your cloth and wear a shawl over your body. Someone might say something unkind about your untidiness, and that would hurt me.' 'No,' I replied, 'I cannot promise that. I cannot be a babu.' Devendra and Mathur laughed.

"The very next day Mathur received a letter from Devendra forbidding me to go to the festival. He wrote that it would be ungentlemanly of me not to cover my body with a shawl. (All laugh.)

"There is another big man : Captain. Though a man of the world, he is a great lover of God. (To Mahima) Talk to him some time. He knows the Vedas, the Vedanta, the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita*, the *Adhyatma Ramayana*, and other scriptures by heart. You will find that out when you talk to him.

"He has great piety. Once I was going along a street in Baranagore and he held an umbrella over my head. He invites me to his house and shows me great attention. He fans me, massages my feet, and feeds me with various dishes. Once at his house I went into samadhi in the toilet ; and he took care of me there though he is so particular about his orthodox habits. He didn't show any abhorrence for the place.

"He has many expenses. He supports his brothers who live in Benares. His wife was a miserly woman at first. Now she is so burdened by the expenses of the family that she cannot spend all the money she would like to.

"Captain's wife said to me : 'He doesn't enjoy worldly life. That is why he once said he would renounce the world.' True, every now and then he expressed that desire.

"Captain was born in a family of devotees. His father was a soldier. I have heard that on the battle-field he would worship Siva with one hand and hold a naked sword in the other.

"Captain is a strong upholder of orthodox conventions. Because of my visiting Keshab Chandra Sen, he stopped coming here for a month. He said to me that Keshab had violated the social conventions : he dined with the English, had married his daughter into another caste, and had lost his own caste. I said to Captain : 'What do I care for such things ? Keshab chants the name of God ; so I go to him to hear about God. I eat only the plum ; what do I care about the thorns ?' But Captain remained stubborn. He said to me, 'Why do you see Keshab ?' I answered him rather sharply : 'But I don't go to him for money ; I go there to hear the name of God. And how is it that you visit the Viceroy's house ? He is a mlechchha. How can you be in his company ?' That silenced him a little.

"But he is a great devotee. When he worships he performs arati with camphor. When he recites hymns he becomes a totally different person. He becomes absorbed.

(To Mahimacharan) "In the light of Vedantic reasoning the world is illusory, unreal as a dream. The Supreme Soul is the Witness—the witness of the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. These things are in your line of thought. The waking state is only as real as the dream. Let me tell you a story that agrees with your attitude.

"There was a farmer who lived in the countryside. He was a real jnani. He earned his living by farming. He was married, and after many years a son was born to him, whom he named Haru. The parents loved the boy dearly. This was natural, since he was the one precious gem in the family. On account of his religious nature the farmer was loved by the villagers. One day he was working in the field when a neighbour came and told him that Haru had had an attack of cholera. The farmer at once returned home and arranged for treatment for the boy. But Haru died. The other members of the family were grief-stricken, but the farmer acted as if nothing had happened. He consoled his family and told them that grieving was futile. Then he went back to his field. On returning home he found his wife weeping even more bitterly. She said to him: 'How heartless you are! You haven't shed one tear for the child.' The farmer replied quietly: 'Shall I tell you why I haven't wept? I had a very vivid dream last night. I dreamt I had become a king; I was the father of eight sons and was very happy with them. Then I woke up. Now I am greatly perplexed. Should I weep for those eight sons or for this one Haru?'"

"The farmer was a jnani; therefore he realized that the waking state is as unreal as the dream state. There is only one eternal Substance, and that is the Atman.

"But for my part I accept everything: Turiya and also the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. I accept all three states. I accept all—Brahman and also maya, the universe, and its living beings. If I accepted less I should not get the full weight."

A DEVOTEE: "The full weight? How is that?" (*All laugh.*)

MASTER: "Brahman is qualified by the universe and its living beings. At the beginning, while following the method of 'Not this, not this', one has to eliminate the universe and its living beings. But as long as 'I-consciousness' remains, one cannot but feel that it is God Himself who has become everything. He alone has become the twenty-four cosmic principles.

"When a man speaks of the essential part of the bel-fruit, he means its flesh only, and not the seeds and shell. But if he wants to speak of the total weight of the fruit, it will not do for him to weigh only the flesh. He must accept the whole thing: seeds and shell and flesh. Seeds and shell and flesh belong to one and the same fruit.

"The Nitya and the Lila belong to the same Reality. Therefore I accept everything, the Relative as well as the Absolute. I don't explain away the world as maya. Were I to do that I should get short weight."

MAHIMACHARAN: "It is a good synthesis: from the Absolute to the Relative, and from the Relative to the Absolute."

MASTER: "The jnanis regard everything as illusory, like a dream; but the bhaktas accept all the states. The milk flows only in dribblets from the jnani. (*All laugh.*) There are some cows that pick and choose their fodder; hence their milk flows only in dribblets. But cows that don't discriminate so much, and eat whatever they get, give milk in torrents. A superior devotee of God accepts both the Absolute and the Relative; therefore he is able to enjoy



the Divine even when his mind comes down from the Absolute. Such a devotee is like the cows that give milk in torrents." (*All laugh.*)

MAHIMA : "But the milk of a cow that eats without discrimination smells a little." (*Laughter.*)

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "That's true, no doubt. Therefore that milk should be boiled. One should boil such milk over the fire a little while ; there will be no smell whatever if you boil the milk over the fire of Knowledge. (*All laugh.*)

(*To Mahima*) "You explain 'Aum' with reference to 'a', 'u', and 'm' only."

MAHIMA : "'A', 'u', and 'm' mean creation, preservation, and destruction."

MASTER : "But I give the illustration of the sound of a gong : 'tom', t—o—m. It is the merging of the Lila in the Nitya : the gross, the subtle, and the causal merge in the Great Cause ; waking, dream, and deep sleep merge in Turiya. The striking of the gong is like the falling of a heavy weight into a big ocean. Waves begin to rise : the Relative rises from the Absolute ; the causal, subtle, and gross bodies appear out of the Great Cause ; from Turiya emerge the states of deep sleep, dream, and waking. These waves arising from the Great Ocean merge again in the Great Ocean. From the Absolute to the Relative, and from the Relative to the Absolute. Therefore I give the illustration of the gong's sound, 'tom'. I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an Ocean of Consciousness without limit. From It come all things of the relative plane, and in It they merge again. Millions of Brahmandas rise in that Chidakasa and merge in It again. All this has been revealed to me ; I don't know much about what your books say."

MAHIMA : "Those to whom such things were revealed did not write the scriptures. They were rapt in their own experiences ; when would they write ? One needs a somewhat calculating mind to write. Others learnt these things from the seers and wrote the books."

MASTER : "Worldly people ask why one does not get rid of attachment to 'woman and gold'. That attachment disappears after the realization of God. If a man once tastes the Bliss of Brahman, then his mind no longer runs after the enjoyment of sense pleasures or wealth or name and fame. If the moth once sees the light, it no longer goes into the darkness."

"Some friends said to Ravana : 'You have been assuming different forms' for Sita. Why don't you go to her in the form of Rama ?' Ravana replied : 'When I contemplate Rama, even the position of Brahma appears insignificant to me, not to speak of the company of another man's wife ! How could I take the form of Rama for such a purpose ?'

"All worship and spiritual discipline are directed to one end alone, namely, to get rid of worldly attachment. The more you meditate on God, the

<sup>4</sup> The "o" is to be pronounced as "aw" in dawn.

<sup>5</sup> During the period when Sita was kept in prison in his capital, Ravana used to visit her in various forms in order to court her favour.

less you will be attached to the trifling things of the world. The more you love the Lotus Feet of God, the less you will crave the things of the world or pay heed to creature comforts. You will look on another man's wife as your mother and regard your own wife as your companion in spiritual life. You will get rid of your bestial desires and acquire godly qualities. You will be totally unattached to the world. Though you may still have to live in the world, you will live as a *jivanmukta*. The disciples of Sri Chaitanya lived as householders in a spirit of detachment.

"You may quote thousands of arguments from Vedanta philosophy to a true lover of God, and try to explain the world as a dream, but you cannot shake his devotion to God." In spite of all your efforts he will come back to his devotion.

"A man born with an element of Siva becomes a *jnani*; his mind is always inclined to the feeling that the world is unreal and Brahman alone is real. But when a man is born with an element of Vishnu he develops ecstatic love of God. That love can never be destroyed. It may wane a little now and then, when he indulges in philosophical reasoning, but it ultimately returns to him increased a thousandfold."

After the devotees had left the Master, Mahimacharan brought Hazra to the room. M. was present. Mahima said to Sri Ramakrishna: Sir, I have a complaint against you. Why have you asked Hazra to go home? He has no desire to return to his family."

MASTER: "His mother has told Ramlal how much she is suffering on account of his being away from home; so I have asked Hazra to go home, at least for three days, and see her. Can anyone succeed in spiritual discipline if it causes suffering to his mother? While visiting Vrindavan I had almost made up my mind to live there, when I remembered my mother. I said to myself, 'My mother will weep if I stay away from her.' So I returned here with Mathur Babu. Besides, why should a *jnani* like Hazra be afraid of going back to the world?"

MAHIMA (*with a smile*): "Sir, that would be a pertinent question if Hazra were a *jnani*."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Oh, Hazra has attained everything. He has just a little attachment to the world because of his children and a small debt. As people say, my aunt is now in perfect health, only she is slightly ill!"

MAHIMA: "Where, sir, is Hazra's knowledge?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Oh, you don't know! Everybody says Hazra is quite a man. Everybody knows that he lives in the Dakshineswar temple garden. People talk of nothing but Hazra. Who would bother to mention my name?" (*All laugh.*)

HAZRA: "You, sir, are incomparable. You have no peer in the world. Therefore nobody understands you."

MASTER: "There you are! To be sure, no one can have dealings with the incomparable. So why should people mention me at all?"

MAHIMA: "What does he know, sir? He will do your bidding."

"According to the non-dualistic Vedanta the Personal God is as illusory as the relative universe; but to a *bhakta*, a devotee, He is real."

MASTER : " That is not so. You had better ask him about it. He said to me, ' You and I are on even terms.' "

MAHIMA : " He argues a great deal. "

MASTER : " Now and then he teaches me a lesson. (*All laugh.*) Sometimes I scold him when he argues too much. Later, when I am lying in bed inside the mosquito curtain, I feel unhappy at the idea of having offended him. So I leave the bed, go to Hazra, and salute him. Then I feel peace of mind. "

(*To Hazra*) " Why do you address the Pure Atman as ' Isvara ' ? The pure Atman is inactive and is the Witness of the three states. When I think of the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, then I call the Pure Atman ' Isvara '. What is the Pure Atman like ? It is like a magnet lying at a great distance from a needle. The needle moves, but the magnet lies motionless, inactive. "

Toward evening Sri Ramakrishna was pacing the room. M. was sitting alone, thinking. Suddenly the Master said to him tenderly : " Please give me a couple of linen shirts. As you know, I cannot use everybody's things. I thought of asking Captain for the shirts, but you had better give them to me. " M. felt highly gratified and said, " As you please, sir. "

At dusk incense was burnt in Sri Ramakrishna's room, and, as usual, he bowed before the pictures of gods and goddesses on the walls and chanted their names softly. From outside one could hear the murmuring of the Ganges and the music of the evening worship in the temples of Kali, Vishnu, and Siva. Through the door one could see the priest at a distance moving from one temple to another, a bell in his left hand and a light in his right, an attendant carrying the gong. The evening melody was in harmony with the spirit of the hour and place and with the innermost thoughts of the worshippers. For the time being the sordid things of daily life were forgotten.

Later Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room in his usual blissful mood. Ishan had come from Calcutta. He had burning faith in God. He used to say, " If a man leaves the house with the hallowed name of Durga on his lips, then Siva Himself protects him with His celestial weapons. "

MASTER (*to Ishan*) : " You have great faith. But I haven't so much. (*All laugh.*) God can be realized only through faith. "

ISHAN : " Yes, sir. "

MASTER : " You practise religious rites—japa, fasting, and the like. That is very good. If a man feels sincerely drawn to God, then God makes him practise all these disciplines. The devotee will certainly realize God if he practises them without desiring their results. A devotee observes many rites because of the injunctions of the scriptures. Such devotion is called *vaidhi-bhakti*. But there is a higher form of devotion known as *raga-bhakti*, which springs from yearning and love for God. Prahlada had such devotion. When the devotee develops that love, he no longer needs to perform prescribed rites. "

November 9, 1884

Sri Ramakrishna was in his room, seated on the small couch and facing the east. The devotees were sitting on the floor. It was about midday when

M. arrived and took a seat after saluting the Master. Gradually other devotees began to gather. Vijaykrishna Goswami was there with several Brahma devotees. The priest Ram Chakravarty was present also. Mahimacharan, Narayan, and Kishori arrived a few minutes later.

It was the beginning of winter. Sri Ramakrishna had felt the need of some shirts and had asked M. to bring them. Besides two broadcloth shirts, M. had brought another of a heavy material, for which Sri Ramakrishna had not asked.

MASTER (to M.): "You had better take that one back with you. You can use it yourself. There is nothing wrong in that. Tell me, what kind of shirt did I ask you to bring?"

M: "Sir, you told me to get you plain ones. You didn't ask me to buy the heavier one."

MASTER: "Then please take that one back. (To Vijay and the others) You see, Dwarika Babu gave me a shawl. The Marwari devotees also brought one for me. I couldn't accept—"

Vijay interrupted the Master, saying: "That is right, sir. If a man needs a thing, he must accept it. And there must be a man to give it. Who but a man will give?"

MASTER: "The giver is the Lord Himself. The mother-in-law said to her daughter-in-law: 'My child, I see that everybody has someone to render him a little personal service. It would be so nice if you could find someone to massage your feet.' The daughter-in-law said: 'Mother, God Himself will massage my feet. I don't need anyone else.' She spoke thus because she was a sincere lover of God.

"Once a fakir went to the Emperor Akbar to ask for money. The Emperor was saying his prayers. He prayed, 'O Lord, give me money; give me wealth.' The fakir started to leave the palace, but the Emperor motioned to him to wait. After finishing his prayers, Akbar came to the holy man and said, 'Why were you going away?' The fakir replied, 'You yourself were begging for money and wealth; so I thought that if I must beg, I would beg of God and not of a beggar.'"

VIJAY: "I saw a sadhu at Gaya. He did not take the initiative in anything. One day he wanted to feed some devotees. Suddenly we found that butter, flour, fruits, and other food-stuff had arrived from no one knew where."

MASTER (to Vijay and the others): "There are three classes of sadhus: good, mediocre, and bad. The good sadhu makes no effort to get his food. The dandis, among others, belong to the mediocre and bad classes. To get food the mediocre sadhu will knock at the door of a house and say, 'Namo Narayana.' The bad sadhu starts a quarrel if he doesn't get his alms.

"The good sadhu behaves like a python. He sits in one place and the food comes to him. The python doesn't move from where it is. A young sadhu, who had been a brahmachari from his boyhood, went out to beg. A young girl offered him alms. The sadhu saw her breasts and thought she had abscesses. He asked about them. The elderly women of the family explained

"Salutations to God." With these words a sadhu greets another person.



that she would some day be a mother and that God had given her breasts to give milk to her children ; God had provided for all this beforehand. At these words the sadhu was struck with wonder. He said : ' Then I don't need to beg. God must have provided for me too.' "

Some of the devotees thought that in that case they should not take any initiative either.

MASTER : " But those who think that an effort is needed must make the effort. "

VIJAY : " There is a nice story about that in the *Bhaktamala*. "

MASTER : " Tell it to us. "

VIJAY : " Please tell us yourself. "

MASTER : " No, you tell it. I don't remember it very well. "

" One should hear these things at the beginning. That is why I listened to them years ago. But now I am no longer in that mood. Hanuman said : ' I don't know the position of the stars or the phase of the moon. I only think of Rama. '

" The chatak bird craves only rain-water. Even when it is dying of thirst, it turns its beak upward and wants only water from the sky. The Ganges, the Jamuna, and the seven oceans are filled to the brim, but still it will not touch the water of the earth. "

" Rama and Lakshmana visited Pampa Lake. Lakshmana saw a crow very eager for water. Again and again it went to the edge of the water but would not drink. Lakshmana asked Rama about it. Rama said : ' Brother, this crow is a great devotee of God. Day and night it repeats the name of Rama. Its throat is parched with thirst, but still it won't drink for fear of missing a repetition of Rama's name. '

" On a full-moon night I said to Haladhari, ' Brother, is it the night of the new moon ? ' (*All laugh.*)

(*Smiling*) " Yes, it is true. Once I was told that a characteristic of a man of Perfect Knowledge is that he cannot distinguish between the full moon and the new moon. But how could one convince Haladhari of that ? He said : ' This is certainly the dark Kaliyuga. He cannot distinguish the full moon from the new moon ! And people respect him ! ' "

Mahimačharan entered the room.

MASTER (*respectfully*) : " Come in. Come in, sir. Please take a seat. "

(*To Vijay and the other devotees*) " In the ecstatic state of mind I cannot remember a date. The other day there was a religious festival at Beni Pal's garden. I forgot the date. I can no longer remember the last day of the month, when it is very auspicious to repeat the name of God. "

Sri Ramakrishna remained thoughtful a few minutes.

MASTER : " But I remember if a man makes an engagement to visit me. "

" A man attains this state when his mind is one hundred per cent absorbed in God. When Hanuman returned from Ceylon, Rama said to him : ' You have seen Sita. Tell me, how did you find her ? ' Hanuman said : ' O Rama, I saw that only the body of Sita lay there ; it held neither her mind nor her soul. She has indeed consecrated her mind and soul to Your Lotus Feet. "

Therefore I saw only her body in Ceylon. Further, I saw the King of Death prowling about. But what could he do ? It was only a body ; it had neither mind nor soul.'

"If you meditate on an ideal you will acquire its nature. If you think of God day and night, you will acquire the nature of God. A salt doll went into the ocean to measure its depth. It became one with the ocean. What is the goal of books or scriptures ? The attainment of God. A man opened a book belonging to a sadhu. He saw the word 'Rama' written on every page. There was nothing else.

"If a man loves God, even the slightest thing kindles spiritual feeling in him. Then, repeating the name of Rama but once, he gets the fruit of ten million sandhyas. At the sight of a cloud the peacock's emotion is awakened : he dances, spreading his tail. Radha had the same experience. Just the sight of a cloud recalled Krishna to her mind.

"Chaitanyadeva was passing a village. He heard that drums were made from the earth of that place. At once he was overwhelmed with ecstasy because drums are used in kirtan.

"But who can have this spiritual awakening ? Only he who has renounced his attachment to worldly things. If the sap of attachment is totally dried up in a man, the slightest suggestion kindles his spiritual emotion. Though you strike a wet match a thousand times, it will not produce a spark. But if it is dried, the slightest rubbing will set it aflame.

"Pain and pleasure are inevitable in a body. He who has realized God dedicates his mind and life, his body and soul, to God. When Rama and Lakshmana went to take their bath in Pampa Lake, they thrust their bows into the ground. Coming out of the water, Lakshmana took out his bow and found its tip stained with blood. Rama said to him : 'Look, brother ! Look. Perhaps we have hurt some creature.' Lakshmana dug in the earth and found a big bullfrog. It was dying. Rama said to the frog in a sorrowful voice : 'Why didn't you croak ? We should have tried to save you. You croak lustily enough when you are in the jaws of a snake.' The frog said : 'O Lord, when I am attacked by a snake I croak, saying : "O Rama, save me ! O Rama, save me !" This time I found that it was Rama who was killing me ; so I kept still.'

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent a few moments watching the devotees. He had heard that Mahimacharan did not believe in following a guru. He began the conversation again.

MASTER : "A man should have faith in the words of his guru. He doesn't have to look into his guru's character. 'Though my guru visits the grog-shop, still he is the Embodiment of Eternal Bliss.'

"A man who used to give recitals of the *Chandi* and the *Bhagavata* once said, 'A broomstick is itself unclean, but it cleans dirty places.'

Mahimacharan studied the Vedanta. His aim was to attain Brahman-jnana. He followed the path of knowledge and was always reasoning.

MASTER (to Mahima) : "The aim of the jnani is to know the nature of his own Self. This is Knowledge ; this is liberation. The true nature of the

Self is that It is the Supreme Brahman : I and the Supreme Brahman are one. But this Knowledge is hidden on account of maya.

"I said to Harish, 'This is the whole thing : the gold is hidden under a few basketfuls of earth, and you must remove the earth.'

"The bhaktas retain 'I-consciousness' ; the jnanis do not. Nangta used to teach how to establish oneself in the true Self, saying, 'Merge the mind in the buddhi and the buddhi in the Atman ; then you will be established in your true Self.'

"But the 'I' persists. It cannot be got rid of. Imagine a limitless expanse of water : above and below, before and behind, right and left, everywhere there is water. In that water is placed a jar filled with water. There is water inside the jar and water outside, but the jar is still there. The 'I' is the jar.

"Even after attaining Knowledge, the jnani keeps his body as before. But the fire of Knowledge burns away his lust and other passions. Many days ago, during an electric storm, a thunderbolt struck the Kali temple. We saw that no injury had been done to the doors ; only the points of the screws were broken. The doors are the body, and the passions—lust and so forth—are the screws.

"A jnani loves to talk only about God. He feels pained if one talks about worldly things. But a worldly man belongs to a different class. He always has the turban of ignorance on his head. He always comes back to worldly topics.

"The Vedas speak of the 'seven planes' of mind. When the jnani's mind ascends to the fifth plane, he cannot listen to anything or talk of anything but God. At that stage only words of wisdom come from his lips.

"The Vedas speak of Satchidananda Brahman. Brahman is neither one nor two ; It is between one and two. It cannot be described either as existence or as non-existence ; It is between existence and non-existence.

"When the devotee develops raga-bhakti, passionate love of God, he realizes Him. But one loses vaidhi-bhakti, formal devotion, as easily as one gains it. This is formal devotion : so much japa, so much meditation, so much sacrifice and dharma, so many articles of worship, and the recitation of so many mantras before the Deity. Such devotion comes in a moment and goes in a moment. Many people say : 'Well, friend, we have lived on havishya for so many days ! How many times we have worshipped the Deity at our home ! And what have we achieved ?' But there is no falling away from raga-bhakti. And who gets this passionate love for God ? Those who have performed many meritorious deeds in their past births, or those who are eternally perfect. Think of a dilapidated house, for instance : while clearing away the undergrowth and rubbish one suddenly discovers a fountain fitted with a pipe. It has been covered with earth and bricks, but as soon as they are removed the water shoots up.

"Those who have passionate love for God do not say any such thing as : 'O brother, how strict I have been about food ! But what have I achieved ?' New farmers give up cultivating if their fields do not yield any crops. But

hereditary farmers will continue to cultivate their fields whether they get a crop or not. Their fathers and grandfathers were farmers ; they know that they too must accept farming as their means of livelihood.

"Only those who have developed raga-bhakti for God may be called His sincere devotees. God becomes responsible for them. If you enter your name in a hospital register, the doctor will not discharge you until you are cured. Those who are held by God have nothing to fear. The son who holds to his father, while walking along the narrow ridge of a paddy-field, may slip if he absent-mindedly lets go his father's hand ; but if the father holds the son by the hand, there is no such danger.

"Is there anything that is impossible for faith ? And a true devotee has faith in everything ; the formless Reality, God with form, Rama, Krishna, and the Divine Mother.

"Once, while going to Kamarpukur, I was overtaken by a storm. I was in the middle of a big meadow. The place was haunted by robbers. I began to repeat the names of all the deities : Rama, Krishna, and Bhagavati. I also repeated the name of Hanuman. I chanted the names of them all. What does that mean ? Let me tell you. While the servant is counting out the money to purchase supplies, he says, 'These pennies are for potatoes, these for egg-plants, these for fish.' He counts the money separately, but after the list is completed, he puts the coins together.

"When one develops love of God, one likes to talk only of God. If you love a person, you love to talk and hear about him. A worldly person's mouth waters while he talks about his son. If someone praises his son, he will at once say to the boy, 'Go and get some water for your uncle to wash his feet.'

"Those who love pigeons are highly pleased if you praise pigeons before them. But if you speak ill of pigeons, they will at once exclaim, 'Has anyone in your line for fourteen generations ever raised pigeons ?'"

Sri Ramakrishna now addressed Mahimacharan, who was a householder.

MASTER : "What need is there of renouncing the world altogether ? It is enough if you can rid yourself of attachment. But you must have sadhana ; you have to fight the sense-organs.

"It is a great advantage to fight from inside a fort. You get much help from the fort. The world is the place for enjoyment. After enjoying different things, you should give them up one by one. Once I had a desire to put a gold chain around my waist. I obtained one at last and put it on, but I had to take it off immediately.

"Once I ate some onion.\* While eating it I discriminated, 'O mind, this is onion.' Then I moved it to different places in my mouth and at last spat it out."

A musician was expected. He was to sing with his party. Sri Ramakrishna asked the devotees every now and then, "Where is the musician ?"

MAHIMA : "We are quite all right as we are."

MASTER : "No, sir. You get this all through the year."

A devotee outside the room said, "The musician has come."

\* The onion is considered a rajasic food and not conducive to spiritual life.



Sri Ramakrishna was filled with joy and said, "Ah ! Has he ?"

Mats were spread on the floor of the long verandah northeast of the Master's room. Sri Ramakrishna said : "Sprinkle a little Ganges water on the mats. Many worldly people have sat on them."

The ladies of Pyari Babu's family, from Bali, had come to visit the temples. They wanted to listen to the kirtan. A devotee said to Sri Ramakrishna : "These ladies have been inquiring whether there would be any place in the room for them. Can they have seats ?" The kirtan had already begun. The Master said, "No, no ! Where is any room here ?"

Narayan arrived and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The latter said tenderly : "Why have you come ? Your people at home have beaten you so much !" He signed to Baburam to give Narayan something to eat. Narayan entered the Master's room. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna followed him. He wanted to feed Narayan with his own hands. Afterwards he returned to the verandah.

Many devotees were present, including Vijay, Mahimacharan, Narayan, M., and the younger Gopal. Soon Narayan came back to the verandah and took his seat by the Master.

About three o'clock Adhar arrived. At the sight of him Sri Ramakrishna appeared excited. The devotee saluted the Master and sat on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna beckoned to him to come nearer.

When the music was over the gathering of devotees broke up. Some began to stroll in the garden and some went to the temples to watch the evening service.

In the evening arrangements were made for kirtan inside the Master's room. Sri Ramakrishna eagerly asked a devotee to have an extra lamp. The two lamps lit the room brightly.

Sri Ramakrishna said to Vijay : "Why are you sitting there ? Come nearer to me." This time the kirtan created an intense atmosphere. The Master danced in an ecstasy of joy ; the devotees also danced encircling him. While Vijay was dancing his cloth dropped. He was unconscious.

When the music was over, Vijay began to look for his key, which had fallen somewhere. The Master said to him with a laugh, "Why bother about it any more ?" He meant that Vijay should have nothing more to do with boxes and keys.

Kishori saluted Sri Ramakrishna and was about to take his leave. The Master blessed him, touching his chest tenderly, and bade him good-bye. His words were full of love. M. and Gopal saluted the Master. They too were about to take their leave. He said to them with the same affection : "Couldn't you go tomorrow morning ? You may catch cold at night."

M. and Gopal decided to spend the night with Sri Ramakrishna. They sat on the floor with a few other devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna had had no rest the whole day : the devotees had been with him all the time. He went out for a few minutes. Returning to the room he saw M. taking down a song from Ramlal.

MASTER : "What are you doing ?"

M. said that he was writing down a song. On being told what the song was, the Master remarked that it was a rather long song. M. wrote a line or two and then stopped writing.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna took his supper of farina pudding and one or two luchis. A lighted lamp stood on a stand by his side. M. sat near him. The Master asked if there were any sweets in the room. M. had brought some sandesh which he had put on the shelf. Sri Ramakrishna asked M. to give him a sweet. M. searched for the sweets but could not find them. He was embarrassed. They had been given to the devotees.

After finishing his supper, Sri Ramakrishna sat on the small couch and M. seated himself on the foot-rug. The Master, talking about Narayan, was overcome with emotion.

MASTER: "I saw Naran today."

M: "Yes, sir. His eyes were moist. When I looked at his face I felt like weeping."

MASTER: "The sight of him arouses a mother's love in me, as it were. His relatives beat him at home because he comes here. There is none to defend him."

M: "The other day he left his books at Haripada's house and fled to you."

MASTER: "It was not good for him to do that."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent. After a few minutes he continued.

MASTER: "You see, he has much substance in him. Otherwise, how could I be attracted to him even though I was listening to the kirtan at the time? I had to leave the music and go into the room. That never happened before."

Again Sri Ramakrishna fell silent. A few minutes later he began to talk.

MASTER: "In an ecstatic state I asked him how he was feeling. He just said he was happy. (To M.) Feed him now and then—as parents do their child."

Sri Ramakrishna then spoke about Tejchandra.

MASTER (To M.): "Please ask him what he thinks of me. Does he think of me as a jnani? Or what does he say about me? I understand that he is very reticent. (To Gopal) Ask Tejchandra to come here Saturdays and Tuesdays. (To M.) Suppose I go to your school and look for—"

M. thought that Sri Ramakrishna wanted to go to his school to see Narayan. He said to the Master, "You might as well wait at our house."

MASTER: "No, I have something else in mind. I should like to see whether there are other worth-while boys in the school."

M: "Of course you can go. Other visitors come to the school. You can come too."

Sri Ramakrishna was smoking. M. and Gopal finished their supper. They decided to sleep in the nahabat. M. again sat on the floor near Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER (to M.): "There may be some pots and pans in the nahabat. Why not sleep here in this room?"

M : " Very well, sir."

It was ten or eleven o'clock at night. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch, resting against a pillow. M. sat on the floor. The Master was conversing with him. A lamp burnt on a stand near the wall.

The Master felt great compassion for his devotees. He wanted to bless M. by accepting his personal service.

MASTER : " My feet ache. Please rub them gently."

M. seated himself on the small couch and took the Master's feet on his lap. He stroked them. Now and then Sri Ramakrishna would ask his disciple a question.

MASTER (*smiling*) : " How did you like today's conversation ? "

M : " Very much indeed."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " How I spoke about the Emperor Akbar ! "

M : " It was very good."

MASTER : " Repeat it to me."

M : " A fakir came to visit Akbar. The Emperor was saying his prayers. In his prayers he was asking God to give him wealth and riches. Thereupon the fakir was about to leave the room quietly. Later, when the Emperor asked him about it, the fakir said, ' If I must beg, why should I beg of a beggar ? '"

MASTER : " What else did we talk about ? "

M : " You told us a great deal about saving up for the future."

ev. MASTER (*smiling*) : " What did I say ? "

roo. M : " As long as a man feels that he must try, he should make an effort. well you told us about it at Sinthi ! "

tw. MASTER : " What did I say ? "

M : " God takes upon Himself complete responsibility for one who totally depends upon Him. It is like a guardian taking charge of a minor. You also told us that at a feast a child cannot by himself find a place to eat his meal ; someone finds a place for him."

MASTER : " No, that is not quite to the point. I said that the child doesn't fall if the father leads him and holds his hand."

M : " You also described the three classes of sadhus. The best sadhu does not move about to get his food ; he lives in one place and gets his food there. You told us about that young sadhu who said, when he saw the breasts of a young girl, ' Why has she those abscesses ? ' You told us many other things."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " What else ? "

M : " About the crow of Pampa Lake. He repeated the name of Rama day and night. That is why he couldn't drink the water though he went to its edge. And about the holy man in whose book was written only ' Om Rama.' And what Hanuman said to Rama."

MASTER : " What did he say ? "

M : " Hanuman said to Rama : ' I saw Sita in Ceylon ; but it was only her body. Her mind and soul were lying at Your feet,'

"And about the chatak bird. He will not drink anything but rain-water. And about jnanayoga and bhaktiyoga."

MASTER : "What did I say about them?"

M : "As long as one is conscious of the 'jar', the ego will certainly remain. As long as one is conscious of 'I', one cannot get rid of the idea, 'I am the devotee and Thou art God'."

MASTER : "No, it is not that; the 'jar' doesn't disappear whether one is conscious of it or not. One cannot get rid of the 'I'. You may reason a thousand times; still it will not go."

M. remained silent a few moments.

M : "You had that talk with Ishan Mukherji in the Kali temple. We were very lucky to be there."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Yes, yes. Tell me, what did I say?"

M : "You said that work is only the first step. You told us that you said to Sambhu Mallick, 'If God appears before you, will you ask Him for a number of hospitals and dispensaries?'"

"You said another thing: God does not reveal Himself to a person as long as he is attached to work. You said that to Keshab Sen."

MASTER : "What did I say?"

M : "As long as the baby plays with the toy and forgets everything else, its mother looks after her cooking and other household duties; but when the baby throws away the toy and cries, then the mother puts down the rice-pot and comes to the baby."

"You said another thing that day: Lakshmana asked Rama where one could find God; after a great deal of explanation, Rama said to him, 'Brother, I dwell in the man in whom you find ecstatic love—a love which makes him laugh and weep and dance and sing.'"

MASTER : "Ah me! Ah me!"

Sri Ramakrishna sat in silence a few minutes.

M : "That day you spoke only words of renunciation to Ishan. Since then many of us have come to our senses. Now we are eager to reduce our duties. You said that day, 'Ravana died in Ceylon and Behula wept bitterly for him.'"

Sri Ramakrishna laughed aloud.

M. (*humbly*) : "Sir, isn't it desirable to reduce the number of one's duties and entanglements?"

MASTER : "Yes. But it is a different thing if you happen to come across a sadhu or a poor man. Then you should serve him."

M : "And that day you spoke very rightly to Ishan about flatterers. They are like vultures on a carcass. You once said that to Padmalochan also."

MASTER : "No, to Vamandas of Ulo."

After a while M. sat on the floor near the small couch. Sri Ramakrishna felt sleepy; he said to M. : "Go to sleep. Where is Gopal? Please shut the door."

Next morning Sri Ramakrishna left his bed very early. As usual, he chanted the holy names of the different gods and goddesses. Now and then



he looked at the sacred river. The morning worship began in the temples of Radhakanta and Mother Kali. M. had spent the night on the floor of the Master's room. He left his bed and watched the worship in the different temples.

Sri Ramakrishna finished his bath and went with M. to the Kali temple. He asked the disciple to lock the door of his room.

In the temple he took the seat in front of the image of Kali and offered flowers, sometimes at Her feet and sometimes on his own head. He fanned the Deity. Then he returned to his room and asked M. to unlock the door. Entering the room, he sat on the small couch. He was completely overwhelmed with divine fervour and began to chant the name of God. M. sat alone on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna began to sing about the Divine Mother :

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ?  
Even the six darsanas are powerless to reveal Her;  
It is She, the scriptures say, that is the Inner Self  
Of the yogi, who in Self discovers all his joy ;  
She that, of Her own sweet will, inhabits every living thing. . . .

Then he sang :

All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali ;  
By Her maya the three words are bewitched . . . .

He continued :

O Kali, who can know Thee ? Numberless are Thy forms. . . .

Again he sang :

O Mother, redeem me speedily !  
From terror of the King of Death I am about to die. . . .

M. said to himself, " I wish he would sing :

Mother, Thou canst not trick me any more,  
For I have seen Thy crimson Lotus Feet."

Strangely enough, no sooner had the thought passed through M.'s mind than Sri Ramakrishna sang the song. A few minutes later he said to M., " What do you think of the present state of my mind ? "

M. (*smiling*) : " It is your simple and natural state."

Sri Ramakrishna sang to himself the following refrain of a song :

Unless a man is simple, he cannot recognize God, the Simple One.

## XXXIV

### BANKIM CHANDRA

*Saturday, December 6, 1884*

**A**DHAR, A GREAT DEVOTEE of Sri Ramakrishna, lived in Sobhabazar in the northern section of Calcutta. Almost every day, after finishing his hard work at the office and returning home in the late afternoon, he paid Sri Ramakrishna a visit. From his home in Calcutta he would go to Dakshineswar in a hired carriage. His sole delight was to visit the Master. But he would hear very little of what Sri Ramakrishna said ; for, after saluting the Master and visiting the temples, he would lie down, at the Master's request, on a mat spread on the floor and would soon fall asleep. At nine or ten o'clock he would be awakened to return home. However, he considered himself blessed to be able to visit the God-man of Dakshineswar. At Adhar's request Sri Ramakrishna often visited his home. His visits were occasions for religious festivals. Devotees in large numbers would assemble, and Adhar would feed them sumptuously. One day, while Sri Ramakrishna was visiting his home, Adhar said to him : " Sir, you haven't come to our house for a long time. The rooms seemed gloomy ; they had a musty smell. But today the whole house is cheerful ; the sweetness of your presence fills the atmosphere. Today I called on God earnestly. I even shed tears while praying." " Is that so ? " the Master said tenderly, casting a kindly glance on his disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna arrived at Adhar's house with his attendants. Everyone was in a joyous mood. Adhar had arranged a rich feast. Many strangers were present. At Adhar's invitation, several other deputy magistrates had come ; they wanted to watch the Master and judge his holiness. Among them was Bankim Chandra Chatterji, perhaps the greatest literary figure of Bengal during the later part of the nineteenth century. He was one of the creators of modern Bengali literature and wrote on social and religious subjects. Bankim was a product of the contact of India with England. He gave modern interpretations of the Hindu scriptures and advocated drastic social reforms.

Sri Ramakrishna had been talking happily with the devotees when Adhar introduced several of his personal friends to him.

ADHAR (*introducing Bankim*) : " Sir, he is a great scholar and has written many books. He has come here to see you. His name is Bankim Babu."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Bankim ! Well, what has made you bent ? "

<sup>1</sup> Literally the word means " bent " or " curved ".

BANKIM (*smiling*): "Why, sir, boots are responsible for it. The kicks of our white masters have bent my body."

MASTER: "No, my dear sir! Sri Krishna was bent on account of His ecstatic love. His body was bent in three places owing to His love for Radha. That is how some people explain Sri Krishna's form. Do you know why He has a deep-blue complexion? And why He is of such small stature—only three and a half cubits measured by His own hand? God looks so as long as He is seen from a distance. So the water of the ocean looks blue from afar. But if you go near the ocean and take the water in your hand, you will no longer find it blue; it will be very clear, transparent. So the sun appears small because it is very far away; if you go near it, you will no longer find it small. When one knows the true nature of God, He appears neither blue nor small. But that is a far-off vision: one does not see it except in samadhi. As long as 'I' and 'you' exist, name and form will also exist. Everything is God's lila, His sportive pleasure. As long as a man is conscious of 'I' and 'you', he will experience the manifestations of God through diverse forms."

"Sri Krishna is the Purusha; Srimati<sup>2</sup> is His Sakti, the Primal Power. The two are Purusha and Prakriti. What is the meaning of the Yugala Murti, the conjoined images of Radha and Krishna? It is that Purusha and Prakriti are not different; there is no difference between them. Purusha cannot exist without Prakriti, and Prakriti cannot exist without Purusha. If you mention the one, the other is understood. It is like fire and its power to burn: one cannot think of fire without its power to burn; again, one cannot think of fire's power to burn without fire. Therefore in the conjoined images of Radha and Krishna, Krishna's eyes are fixed on Radha and Radha's on Krishna. Radha's complexion is golden, like lightning; so Krishna wears yellow apparel. Krishna's complexion is blue, like a dark cloud; so Radha wears a blue dress; she has also decked herself with blue sapphires. Radha has tinkling anklets; so Krishna has them too. In other words, there is inner and outer harmony between Purusha and Prakriti."

As Sri Ramakrishna finished these words, Bankim and his friends began to whisper in English.

MASTER (*smiling, to Bankim and the others*): "Well, gentlemen! What are you talking about in English?"

ADHAR: "We are discussing what you have just said, your explanation of Krishna's form."

MASTER (*smiling*): "That reminds me of a funny story. It makes me want to laugh. Once a barber was shaving a gentleman. The latter was cut slightly by the razor. At once he cried out, 'Damn!' But the barber didn't know the meaning of the word. He put his razor and other shaving articles aside, tucked up his shirt-sleeves—it was winter—and said: 'You said "damn" to me. Now you must tell me its meaning.' The gentleman said: 'Don't be silly. Go on with your shaving. The word doesn't mean anything in particular; but shave a little more carefully.' But the barber wouldn't let him off so easily. He said, 'If "damn" means something good, then I am a "damn", my father

<sup>2</sup> Radhika, the Divine Consort of Krishna.

is a "damn", and all my ancestors are "damns". (*All laugh.*) But if it means something bad, then you are a "damn", your father is a "damn", and all your ancestors are "damns". (*All laugh.*) They are not only "damns", but "damn—damn—damn—da-damn—damn". (*Loud laughter.*)

As the laughter stopped, Bankim began the conversation.

BANKIM : "Sir, why don't you preach?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Preaching? It is only a man's vanity that makes him think of preaching. A man is but an insignificant creature. It is God alone who will preach—God who has created the sun and moon and so illumined the universe. Is preaching such a trifling affair? You cannot preach unless God reveals Himself to you and gives you the command to preach. Of course, no one can stop you from preaching. You haven't received the command, but still you cry yourself hoarse. People will listen to you a couple of days and then forget all about it. It is like any other sensation : as long as you speak, people will say, 'Ah! He speaks well'; and the moment you stop, everything will disappear.

"The milk in the pot hisses and swells as long as there is heat under it. Take away the heat, and the milk will quiet down as before.

"One must increase one's strength by sadhana ; otherwise one cannot preach. As the proverb goes : 'You have no room to sleep yourself and you invite a friend to sleep with you.' There is no place for you to lie down and you say : 'Come, friend ! Come and lie down with me.' (*Laughter.*)

"Some people used to befoul the bank of the Haldarpukur at Kamar-pukur every morning. The villagers would notice it and abuse the offenders. But that didn't stop it. At last the villagers filed a petition with the government. An officer visited the place and put up a sign : 'Commit no nuisance. Offenders will be punished.' That stopped it completely. Afterwards there was no more trouble. It was a government order, and everyone had to obey it.

"Likewise, if God reveals Himself to you and gives you the command, then you can preach and teach people. Otherwise, who will listen to you?"

The visitors were listening seriously.

MASTER (*to Bankim*) : "I understand you are a great pundit and have written many books. Please tell me what you think about man's duties? What will accompany him after death? You believe in the hereafter, don't you?"

BANKIM : "The hereafter? What is that?"

MASTER : "True. When a man dies after attaining Knowledge, he doesn't have to go to another plane of existence ; he isn't born again. But as long as he has not attained Knowledge, as long as he has not realized God, he must come back to the life of this earth ; he can never escape it. For such a person there is a hereafter. A man is liberated after attaining Knowledge, after realizing God. For him there is no further coming back to earth. If a boiled paddy-grain is sown, it doesn't sprout. Just so, if a man is boiled by the fire of Knowledge, he cannot take part any more in the play of creation ; he cannot lead a worldly life, for he has no attachment to 'woman and gold'. What will you gain by sowing boiled paddy?"

BANKIM (*smiling*) : "Sir, neither does a weed serve the purpose of a tree."



MASTER : " But you cannot call a jnani a weed. He who has realized God has obtained the fruit of Immortality—not a common fruit like a gourd or a pumpkin. He is free from rebirth. He is not born anywhere—on earth, in the solar world, or in the lunar world.

" Analogy is one-sided. You are a pundit ; haven't you read logic ? Suppose you say that a man is as terrible as a tiger. That doesn't mean that he has a fearful tail or a tiger's pot-face ! (*All laugh.*)

" I said the same thing to Keshab. He asked me, ' Sir, is there an after-life ? ' I didn't commit myself either way. I said that the potters put their pots in the sun to bake. Among them you see both baked and soft pots. Sometimes cattle trample over them. When the baked pots are broken, the potters throw them away ; but when the soft ones are broken they keep them. They mix them with water and put the clay on the wheel and make new pots. They don't throw away the unbaked pots. So I said to Keshab : ' The Potter won't let you go as long as you are unbaked. He will put you on the wheel of the world as long as you have not attained Knowledge, as long as you have not realized Him. He won't let you go. You will have to return to the earth again and again : there is no escape. You will be liberated only when you realize God. Then alone will the Potter let you go. It is because then you won't serve any purpose in this world of maya.' The jnani has gone beyond maya. What will he do in this world of maya ?

" But God keeps some jnanis in the world of maya to be teachers of men. In order to teach others the jnani lives in the world with the help of vidyamaya. It is God Himself who keeps the jnani in the world for His work. Such was the case with Sukadeva and Sankaracharya.

(*To Bankim, smiling*) " Well, what do you say about man's duties ? "

BANKIM (*smiling*) : " If you ask me about them, I should say they are eating, sleeping, and sex-life."

MASTER (*sharply*) : " Eh ? You are very saucy ! What you do day and night comes out through your mouth. A man belches what he eats. If he eats radish, he belches radish ; if he eats green coconut, he belches green coconut. Day and night you live in the midst of ' woman and gold ' ; so your mouth utters words about that alone. By constantly thinking of worldly things a man becomes calculating and deceitful. On the other hand, he becomes guileless by thinking of God. A man who has seen God will never say what you have just said. What will a pundit's scholarship profit him if he does not think of God and has no discrimination and renunciation ? Of what use is erudition if the mind dwells on ' woman and gold ' ?

" Kites and vultures soar very high indeed, but their gaze is fixed only on the charnel-pit. The pundit has no doubt studied many books and scriptures ; he may rattle off their texts, or he may have written books. But if he is attached to women, if he thinks of money and honour as the essential things, will you call him a pundit ? How can a man be a pundit if his mind does not dwell on God ?

" Some may say about the devotees : ' Day and night these people speak about God. They are crazy ; they have lost their heads. But how clever

we are ! How we enjoy pleasure—money, honour, the senses ! The crow, too, thinks he is a clever bird ; but the first thing he does when he wakes up in the early morning is to fill his stomach with nothing but others' filth. Haven't you noticed how he struts about ? Very clever indeed ! "

There was dead silence.

Sri Ramakrishna continued : " But like the swan are those who think of God, who pray day and night to get rid of their attachment to worldly things and their love for 'woman and gold', who do not enjoy anything except the nectar of the Lotus Feet of the Lord, and to whom worldly pleasures taste bitter. If you put a mixture of milk and water before the swan, it will leave the water and drink only the milk. And haven't you noticed the gait of a swan ? It goes straight ahead in one direction. So it is with genuine devotees : they go toward God alone. They seek nothing else ; they enjoy nothing else.

(*Tenderly, to Bankim*) " Please don't take offence at my words."

BANKIM : " Sir, I haven't come here to hear sweet things."

MASTER (*to Bankim*) : " 'Woman and gold' alone is the world ; that alone is maya. Because of it you cannot see or think of God. After the birth of one or two children, husband and wife should live as brother and sister and talk only of God. Then both their minds will be drawn to God, and the wife will be a help to the husband on the path of spirituality. None can taste divine bliss without giving up his animal feeling. A devotee should pray to God to help him get rid of this feeling. It must be a sincere prayer. God is our Inner Controller ; He will certainly listen to our prayer if it is sincere.

" And 'gold'. Sitting on the bank of the Ganges below the Panchavati, I used to say, 'Rupee is clay and clay is rupee'. Then I threw both into the Ganges."

BANKIM : " Indeed ! Money is clay ! Sir, if you have a few pennies you can help the poor. If money is clay, then a man cannot give in charity or do good to others."

MASTER (*to Bankim*) : " Charity ! Doing good ! How dare you say you can do good to others ? Man struts about so much ; but if one pours foul water into his mouth when he is asleep, he doesn't even know it ; his mouth overflows with it. Where are his boasting, his vanity, his pride, then ?

" A sannyasi must give up 'woman and gold' ; he cannot accept it any more. One must not swallow one's own spittle. When a sannyasi gives something to another, he knows that it is not himself who gives. Kindness belongs to God alone. How can a man lay claim to it ? Charity depends on the will of Rama. A true sannyasi renounces 'woman and gold' both mentally and outwardly. He who eats no molasses must not even keep molasses about. If he does, and yet tells others not to eat it, they won't listen to him.

" A householder, of course, needs money, for he has a wife and children. He should save up to feed them. They say that the bird and the sannyasi should not provide for the future. But the mother bird brings food in her mouth for her chicks ; so she too provides. A householder needs money. He has to support his family.

"If a householder is a genuine devotee he performs his duties without attachment; he surrenders the fruit of his work to God—his gain or loss, his pleasure or pain—and day and night he prays for devotion and for nothing else. This is called motiveless work, the performance of duty without attachment. A sannyasi, too, must do all his work in that spirit of detachment; but he has no worldly duties to attend to, like a householder.

"If a householder gives in charity in a spirit of detachment, he is really doing good to himself and not to others. It is God alone that he serves—God, who dwells in all beings; and when he serves God, he is really doing good to himself and not to others. If a man thus serves God through all beings, not through men alone but through animals and other living beings as well; if he doesn't seek name and fame, or heaven after death; if he doesn't seek any return from those he serves; if he can carry on his work of service in this spirit—then he performs truly selfless work, work without attachment. Through such selfless work he does good to himself. This is called karmayoga. This too is a way to realize God. But it is very difficult, and not suited to the Kaliyuga.

"Therefore I say, he who works in such a detached spirit—who is kind and charitable—benefits only himself. Helping others, doing good to others—this is the work of God alone, who for men has created the sun and moon, father and mother, fruits, flowers, and corn. The love that you see in parents is God's love: He has given it to them to preserve His creation. The compassion that you see in the kind-hearted is God's compassion: He has given it to them to protect the helpless. Whether you are charitable or not, He will have His work done somehow or other. Nothing can stop His work.

"What then is man's duty? What else can it be? It is just to take refuge in God and to pray to Him with a yearning heart for His vision.

"Sambhu said to me: 'It is my desire to build a large number of hospitals and dispensaries. Thus I can do much good to the poor.' I said to him: 'Yes, that is not bad if you can do it in a detached spirit. But to be detached is very difficult unless you sincerely love God. And further, if you entangle yourself in many activities, you will be attached to them in a way unknown to yourself. You may think you have no motive behind your work, but perhaps there has already grown a desire for fame and the advertising of your name. Then again, if you are entangled in too many activities, the pressure of them will make you forget God.' I also said to him: 'Sambhu, let me ask you one thing. If God appears before you, will you want Him or a number of hospitals and dispensaries?' If one realizes God, one doesn't enjoy anything else. One who has tasted syrup of sugar candy cannot enjoy a drink made from common treacle.

"Those who build hospitals and dispensaries, and get pleasure from that, are no doubt good people; but they are of a different type. He who is a real devotee of God seeks nothing but God. If he finds himself entangled in too much work, he earnestly prays, 'Lord, be gracious and reduce my work; my mind, which should think of Thee day and night, has been wasting its power; it thinks of worldly things alone.' Pure-souled devotees are in a class

by themselves. You cannot have real love of God unless you know that God alone is real and all else illusory. You cannot have real love of God unless you know that the world is impermanent, only of two days' existence, while its Creator alone is real and eternal.

"Janaka and sages like him worked in the world at the command of God.

(*To Bankim*) "Some people think that God cannot be realized without the study of books and scriptures. They think that first of all one should learn of this world and its creatures; that first of all one should study 'science'. (*All laugh.*) They think that one cannot realize God without first understanding His creation. Which comes first, 'science' or God? What do you say?"

BANKIM: "I too think that we should first of all know about the different things of the world. How can we know of God without knowing something of this world? We should first learn from books."

MASTER: "That's the one cry from all of you. But God comes first and then the creation. After attaining God you can know everything else, if it is necessary.

"If you can somehow get yourself introduced to Jadu Mallick, then you will be able to learn, if you want to, the number of his houses and gardens and the amount of his money invested in government securities. Jadu Mallick himself will tell you all about them. But if you haven't met him and if you are stopped by his door-keepers when you try to enter his house, then how will you get the correct information about his houses, gardens, and government securities? When you know God you know all else; but then you don't care to know small things. The same thing is stated in the Vedas. You talk about the virtues of a person as long as you haven't seen him, but no sooner does he appear before you than all such talk stops. You are beside yourself with joy simply to be with him. You feel overwhelmed by simply conversing with him. You don't talk about his virtues any more.

"First realize God, then think of the creation and other things. Valmiki was given the name of Rama to repeat as his mantra, but was told at first to repeat 'mara'. 'Ma' means God and 'ra' the world. First God and then the world. If you know one you know all. If you put fifty zeros after a one, you have a large sum; but erase the one and nothing remains. It is the one that makes the many. First one, then many. First God, then His creatures and the world.

"The one thing you need is to realize God. Why do you bother so much about the world, creation, 'science', and all that? Your business is to eat mangoes. What need have you to know how many hundreds of trees there are in the orchard, how many thousands of branches, and how many millions of leaves? You have come to the garden to eat mangoes. Go and eat them. Man is born in this world to realize God; it is not good to forget that and divert the mind to other things. You have come to eat mangoes. Eat the mangoes and be happy."

BANKIM: "Where do we get the mangoes?"

MASTER: "Pray to God with a longing heart. He will surely listen to your prayer if it is sincere. Perhaps He will direct you to holy men with whom



you can keep company ; and that will help you on your spiritual path. Perhaps someone will tell you, 'Do this and you will attain God.'"

BANKIM : "Who ? The guru ? He enjoys all the good mangoes himself and gives us the bad ones !" (*Laughter.*)

MASTER : "Why should that be so ? The mother knows what food suits the stomachs of her different children. Can all of them digest pilau and kalia ? Suppose a fish has been procured. The mother doesn't give pilau and kalia to all the children. For the weak child with a poor stomach she prepares simple soup. But does that mean she loves him the less ?

"One must have faith in the guru's words. The guru is none other than Satchidananda. God Himself is the Guru. If you only believe his words like a child, you will realize God. What faith a child has ! When a child's mother says to him about a certain man, 'He is your brother', the child believes he really is his brother. The child believes it one hundred and twenty-five per cent, though he may be the son of a brahmin, and the man the son of a blacksmith. The mother says to the child, 'There is a bugaboo in that room', and the child really believes there is a bugaboo in the room. Such is the faith of a child ! One must have this childlike faith in the guru's words. God cannot be realized by a mind that is hypocritical, calculating, or argumentative. One must have faith and sincerity. Hypocrisy will not do. To the sincere, God is very near ; but He is far, far away from the hypocrite.

"One must have for God the yearning of a child. The child sees nothing but confusion when his mother is away. You may try to cajole him by putting a sweetmeat in his hand ; but he will not be fooled. He only says, 'No, I want to go to my mother.' One must feel such yearning for God. Ah, what yearning ! How restless a child feels for his mother ! Nothing can make him forget his mother. He to whom the enjoyment of worldly happiness appears tasteless, he who takes no delight in anything of the world—money, name, creature comforts, sense pleasure—, becomes sincerely grief-stricken for the vision of the Mother. And to him alone the Mother comes running, leaving all Her other duties.

"Ah, that restlessness is the whole thing. Whatever path you follow—whether you are a Hindu, a Mussalman, a Christian, a Sakta, a Vaishnava, or a Brahmo—the vital point is restlessness. God is our Inner Guide. It doesn't matter if you take a wrong path—only you must be restless for Him. He Himself will put you on the right path.

"Besides, there are errors in all paths. Everyone thinks his watch is right ; but as a matter of fact no watch is absolutely right. But that doesn't hamper one's work. If a man is restless for God he gains the company of sadhus and as far as possible corrects his own watch with the sadhus' help."

Trailokya of the Brahmo Samaj began to sing. Presently Sri Ramakrishna stood up and lost consciousness of the outer world. He became completely indrawn, absorbed in samadhi. The devotees stood around him in a circle. Pushing aside the crowd, Bankim came near the Master and began to watch him attentively. He had never seen anyone in samadhi.

After a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna regained partial consciousness and began to dance in an ecstatic mood. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

Bankim and his Anglicized friends looked at him in amazement. Was this the God-intoxicated state? The devotees also watched him with wondering eyes.

The singing and dancing over, the Master touched the ground with his forehead, saying, "Bhagavata—Bhakta—Bhagavan! Salutations to the jnanis, yogis, and bhaktas! Salutations to all!" He sat down again and all sat around him.

BANKIM (*to the Master*): "Sir, how can one develop divine love?"

MASTER: "Through restlessness—the restlessness a child feels for his mother. The child feels bewildered when he is separated from his mother, and weeps longingly for her. If a man can weep like that for God he can even see Him.

"At the approach of dawn the eastern horizon becomes red. Then one knows it will soon be sunrise. Likewise, if you see a person restless for God, you can be pretty certain that he hasn't long to wait for His vision.

"A disciple asked his teacher, 'Sir, please tell me how I can see God.' 'Come with me,' said the guru, 'and I shall show you.' He took the disciple to a lake, and both of them got into the water. Suddenly the teacher pressed the disciple's head under the water. After a few moments he released him and the disciple raised his head and stood up. The guru asked him, 'How did you feel?' The disciple said, 'Oh! I thought I should die; I was panting for breath.' The teacher said, 'When you feel like that for God, then you will know you haven't long to wait for His vision.'

(*To Bankim*) "Let me tell you something. What will you gain by floating on the surface? Dive a little under the water. The gems lie deep under the water; so what is the good of throwing your arms and legs about on the surface? A real gem is heavy. It doesn't float; it sinks to the bottom. To get the real gem you must dive deep."

BANKIM: "Sir what can we do? We are tied to a cork. It prevents us from diving." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER: "All sins vanish if one only remembers God. His name breaks the fetters of death. You must dive; otherwise you can't get the gem. Listen to a song."

The Master sang in his sweet voice:

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty,  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love.

Go seek, O mind, go seek Vrindavan in your heart,  
Where with His loving devotees  
Sri Krishna sports eternally.

Light up, O mind, light up true wisdom's shining lamp,  
And let it burn with steady flame  
Unceasingly within your heart.

Who is it that steers your boat across the solid earth?  
It is your guru, says Kubir;  
Meditate on his holy feet.

All listened spellbound. Again Sri Ramakrishna began to talk.

MASTER (*to Bankim*): "There are some who do not want to dive. They say, 'Won't we become deranged if we go to excess about God?' Referring to those who are intoxicated with divine love, they say, 'These people have lost their heads.' But they don't understand this simple thing: God is the Ocean of Amrita, Immortality. Once I said to Narendra: 'Suppose there were a cup of syrup and you were a fly. Where would you sit to drink the syrup?' Narendra said, 'I would sit on the edge of the cup and stretch out my neck to drink it.' 'Why?' I asked. 'What's the harm of plunging into the middle of the cup and drinking the syrup?' Narendra answered, 'Then I should stick in the syrup and die.' 'My child,' I said to him, 'that isn't the nature of the Nectar of Satchidananda. It is the Nectar of Immortality. Man does not die from diving into it. On the contrary he becomes immortal.'

"Therefore I say, dive deep. Don't be afraid. By diving deep in God one becomes immortal."

Bankim bowed low before the Master. He was about to take his leave.

BANKIM: "Sir, I am not such an idiot as you may think. I have a prayer to make. Please be kind enough to grace my house with the dust of your holy feet."

MASTER: "That's nice. I shall go if God wills."

BANKIM: "There too you will see devotees of God."

MASTER (*smiling*): "How so? What kind of devotees are they? Are they like those who said, 'Gopal! Gopal! Kesava! Kesava!'" (*All laugh.*)

A DEVOTEE: "What is the story of 'Gopal', sir?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Let me tell you. At a certain place there is a goldsmith's shop. The workers there are known as pious Vaishnavas: they have strings of beads around their necks, religious marks on their foreheads, and bags containing rosaries in their hands. They repeat the names of God aloud. One can almost call them sadhus; only they have to work as goldsmiths to earn their bread and support their wives and children. Many customers, hearing of their piety, come to the shop because they believe that in that shop there will be no trickery with their gold or silver. When the customers enter the shop, they see the workers repeating the name of Hari with their tongues and doing their work with their hands. No sooner do the customers take seats in the shop than one of the workers cries out, 'Kesava! Kesava! Kesava!' A few minutes later another says, 'Gopal! Gopal! Gopal!' After they talk a little while, the third man cries out, 'Hari! Hari! Hari!' In the mean time the customers have almost finished their transactions. Then the fourth exclaims, 'Hara! Hara! Hara!' The customers are very much impressed with the devotion and fervour of the owners and feel themselves quite secure in handing them the money. They are sure they won't be cheated.

"But do you know what lies behind all this? The man who says 'Kesava! Kesava!' after the arrival of the customers means, 'Who are they?' In other words, he wants to know how intelligent they are. The man who says 'Gopal! Gopal!' means to say he finds them no better than a herd of cows.

<sup>8</sup> These four names of God have a double meaning in Bengali. The second meaning of each word is given in italics.

The man saying 'Hari ! Hari !' means, '*May I rob them ?*'; he suggests that since they are like a herd of cows they can be robbed. And the last man, who says 'Hara ! Hara !', replies, 'Yes, *rob them.*' He means that since the customers are like a herd of cows, they can certainly be robbed. Here, too, you see a group of pious men, very much devoted to God !" (*All laugh.*)

Bankim took his leave ; but he was absent-minded. When he reached the door he discovered that he had dropped his shawl in the room ; he was in his shirt-sleeves. A gentleman handed him his shawl.

Of the devotees at Adhar's house, Sarat<sup>4</sup> and Sannyal were brahmins. But Adhar belonged to the lower caste of the goldsmiths, and so the two brahmins quickly left, lest they should be pressed by their host to take their meal there. Sarat and Sannyal had been coming to the Master only a short time and did not know how fond the Master was of Adhar. The Master used to say that the devotees formed a separate caste by themselves ; among them there could be no caste distinction.

Adhar entertained the Master and the devotees with a feast. It was quite late in the evening when the devotees returned home, cherishing in their hearts the image of the Master in his spiritual ecstasy and remembering his words of great wisdom.

Since Bankim had invited Sri Ramakrishna to visit his home, the Master a few days later sent Girish and M. to his Calcutta residence. At that time Bankim had a long discussion with these two devotees about the Master. He told them that he wanted to visit Sri Ramakrishna again. But his desire was not fulfilled.

<sup>4</sup> Sarat became a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna under the name of Swami Saradananda.



## XXXV

### AT THE STAR THEATRE (II)

Sunday, December 14, 1884

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA arrived at the Star Theatre on Beadon Street in Calcutta to see a play about the life of Prahlada. M., Baburam, Narayan, and other devotees were with him. The hall was brightly lighted. The play had not yet begun. The Master was seated in a box, talking with Girish.

MASTER (*smiling*): "Ah! You have written nice plays."

GIRISH: "But, sir, how little I assimilate! I just write."

MASTER: "No, you assimilate a great deal. The other day I said to you that no one could sketch a divine character unless he had love of God in his heart.

"Yes, one needs to assimilate spiritual ideas. I went to Keshab's house to see the play, *Nava-Vrindavan*. I saw a deputy magistrate there who earned eight hundred rupees a month. Everyone said that he was a very learned man; but I found him restless because of a boy, his son. He was very anxious to find a good seat for the boy; he paid no attention to the spiritual conversation of the players. The boy was pestering him with questions: 'Father! What is this? What is that?' He was extremely busy with the boy. You see, he merely read books; but he didn't assimilate their ideas."

GIRISH: "I often ask myself, 'Why bother about the theatre any more?'"

MASTER: "No, no! Let things be as they are. People will learn much from your plays."

The performance began. Prahlada was seen entering the schoolroom as a student. At the sight of him Sri Ramakrishna uttered once or twice the word "Prahlada" and went into samadhi.

During another scene Sri Ramakrishna wept to see Prahlada under an elephant's feet. He cried when the boy was thrown into the fire.

The scene changed. Lakshmi and Narayana were seen seated in Goloka. Narayana was worried about Prahlada. This scene, too, threw Sri Ramakrishna into an ecstatic mood.

After the performance Girish conducted Sri Ramakrishna to his private room in the theatre. He said to the Master, "Would you care to see the farce, *Vivaha Vibhrata* ['The Confusion of Marriage']?"

MASTER : " Oh, no ! Why something like that after the life of Prahlada ? I once said to the leader of a theatrical troupe, ' End your performance with some religious talk.' We have been listening to such wonderful spiritual conversation ; and now to see ' The Confusion of Marriage ' ! A worldly topic ! We should become our old selves again. We should return to our old mood."

GIRISH : " How did you like the performance ?"

MASTER : " I found that it was God Himself who was acting the different parts. Those who played the female parts seemed to me the direct embodiments of the Blissful Mother, and the cowherd boys of Goloka the embodiments of Narayana Himself. It was God alone who had become all these."

" There are signs by which you can know whether a man has truly seen God. One of these is joy ; there is no hesitancy in him. He is like the ocean : the waves and sounds are on the surface ; below are profound depths. The man who has seen God behaves sometimes like a madman ; sometimes like a ghoul, without any feeling of purity or impurity ; sometimes like an inert thing, remaining speechless because he sees God within and without ; sometimes like a child, without any attachment, wandering about unconcernedly with his cloth under his arm. Again, in the mood of a child, he acts in different ways : sometimes like a boy, indulging in frivolity ; sometimes like a young man, working and teaching with the strength of a lion."

" Man cannot see God on account of his ego. You cannot see the sun when a cloud rises in the sky. But that doesn't mean there is no sun ; the sun is there just the same."

" But there is no harm in the ' ego of a child '. On the contrary, this ego is helpful. Greens are bad for the stomach ; but hincbe is good. So hincbe cannot properly be called greens. Sugar candy, likewise, cannot be classed with other sweets. Other sweets are injurious to the health, but not sugar candy."

" So I said to Keshab, ' If I tell you more than I have already said, you won't be able to keep your organization together.' That frightened him. Then I said to him, ' There is no harm in the " ego of a child " or the " ego of a servant ".'

" He who has seen God finds that God alone has become the world and all its living beings ; it is He who has become all. Such a person is called a superior devotee."

GIRISH (*smiling*) : " Yes, God is everything. But the devotee keeps a trace of ego ; that is not harmful."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Yes, there is no harm in that. That trace of ego is kept in order to enjoy God. You can enjoy divine bliss only when you make a distinction between yourself and God—the distinction between the servant and the Master."

" There is also the devotee of the mediocre class ; he sees that God dwells in all beings as their Inner Guide. But the inferior devotee says, ' God exists ; He is up there ', that is to say, beyond the sky. (*All laugh.*)"

" When I saw the cowherd boys of Goloka in your performance I felt that God has become all. He who has seen God knows truly that God alone is the Doer, that it is He who does everything."

GIRISH : " Sir, I know truly that it is God who does everything."

MASTER : " I say, ' O Mother, I am the machine and You are the Operator ; I am inert and You make me conscious ; I do as You make me do ; I speak as You make me speak.' But the ignorant say, ' I am partly responsible, and God is partly responsible.'"

GIRISH : " Sir, I am not really doing anything. Why should I bother about work at all ?"

MASTER : " No, work is good. When the ground is well cultivated and cleared of stones and pebbles, whatever you plant will grow. But one should work without any personal motive.

" There are two types of paramahamsas : the jnani and the premi.<sup>1</sup> The jnani is self-centred ; he feels that it is enough to have Knowledge for his own self. The premi, like Sukadeva, after attaining his own realization, teaches men. Some eat mangoes and wipe off the traces from their mouths ; but some share their mangoes with others. Spades and baskets are needed to dig a well. After the digging is over, some throw the spades and baskets into the well. But others put them away ; for a neighbour may use them. Sukadeva and a few others kept the spades and baskets for the benefit of others. (To Girish) You should do the same."

GIRISH : " Please bless me, sir."

MASTER : " Have faith in the Divine Mother and you will attain everything."

GIRISH : " But I am a sinner."

MASTER : " The wretch who constantly harps on sin becomes a sinner."

GIRISH : " Sir, the very ground where I used to sit would become unholy."

MASTER : " How can you say that ? Suppose a light is brought into a room that has been dark a thousand years ; does it illumine the room little by little, or all in a flash ?"

GIRISH : " Then you have blessed me."

MASTER : " If you sincerely believe it. What more shall I say ? I eat and drink and chant the name of God."

GIRISH : " I have no sincerity. Please give it to me."

MASTER : " I ? Sages like Narada and Sukadeva could have done that."

GIRISH : " I don't see Narada and Sukadeva. But you are here before me."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " All right. You have faith."

All remained silent. The conversation began again.

GIRISH : " I have one desire : love of God for its own sake."

MASTER : " Only the Isvarakotis have such love. It is not for ordinary men."

All sat in silence. The Master began to sing in an absent-minded mood, his gaze turned upward :

Can everyone have the vision of Syama ? Is Kali's treasure for everyone ?

Oh, what a pity my foolish mind will not see what is true !

Even with all His penances, rarely does Siva Himself behold  
The mind-bewitching sight of Mother Syama's crimson feet,

<sup>1</sup> Lover of God.

To him who meditates on Her the riches of heaven are poor indeed ;  
 If Syama casts Her glance on him, he swims in Eternal Bliss.  
 The Prince of yogis, the King of the gods, meditate on Her feet  
 in vain ;

Yet worthless Kamalakanta yearns for the Mother's blessed feet !

Girish repeated :

Yet worthless Kamalakanta yearns for the Mother's blessed feet !

MASTER (to Girish) : " One can realize God through intense renunciation. But the soul must be restless for Him, as restless as one feels for a breath of air when one's head is pressed under water.

" A man can see God if he unites in himself the force of these three attractions : the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man, the husband's attraction for the chaste wife, and the child's attraction for its mother. If you can unite these three forms of love and give it all to God, then you can see Him at once.

Cry to your Mother Syama with a real cry, O mind !  
 And how can She hold Herself from you ?

" If a devotee prays to God with real longing, God cannot help revealing Himself to him.

" The other day I told you the meaning of bhakti. It is to adore God with body, mind, and words. ' With body ' means to serve and worship God with one's hands, go to holy places with one's feet, hear the chanting of the name and glories of God with one's ears, and behold the divine image with one's eyes. ' With mind ' means to contemplate and meditate on God constantly and to remember and think of His lila. ' With words ' means to sing hymns to Him and chant His name and glories.

" Devotion as described by Narada is suited to the Kaliyuga. It means to chant constantly the name and glories of God. Let those who have no leisure worship God at least morning and evening by whole-heartedly chanting His name and clapping their hands.

" The ' ego of a devotee ' begets no pride ; it does not create ignorance. On the contrary it helps one realize God. This ego is no more like the ordinary ego than hinche is like ordinary greens. One generally becomes indisposed by eating greens ; but hinche removes excessive bile ; it does one good. Sugar candy is not like ordinary sweets. Sweets are generally harmful, but sugar candy removes acidity.

" Nishtha leads to bhakti ; bhakti, when mature, becomes bhava ; bhava, when concentrated, becomes mahabhava ; and last of all is prema. Prema is like a cord : by prema God is bound to the devotee ; He can no longer run away. An ordinary man can at best achieve bhava. None but an Isvarakoti attains mahabhava and prema. Chaitanyadeva attained them.

" What is the meaning of jnanayoga ? It is the path by which a man can realize the true nature of his own Self ; it is the awareness that Brahman alone is his true nature. Prahlada sometimes was aware of his identity with Brahman. And sometimes he would see that God was one and he another ; at such times he would remain in the mood of bhakti.



"Hanuman said, 'O Rama, sometimes I find that You are the whole and I a part, sometimes that You are the Master and I Your servant ; but, O Rama, when I have the Knowledge of Reality, I see that You are I and I am You.'"

GIRISH : " Ah ! "

MASTER : " Why shouldn't a man be able to realize God in the world ? But he must have discrimination and dispassion ; he must have the unshakable awareness that God alone is real and all else is unreal and has but a two-days' existence. It will not do to float on the surface. You must dive deep."

With these words, the Master sang :

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty ;  
If you descend to the uttermost depths,  
There you will find the gem of Love. . . .

MASTER : " You must remember another thing : in the ocean there is danger of alligators, that is to say, of lust and the like."

GIRISH : " I am not afraid of the King of Death."

MASTER : " But I am speaking of the danger of the alligators of lust and the like. Because of them one should smear one's body with turmeric before diving in—the turmeric of discrimination and dispassion."

"Some attain knowledge of God in the world. Mention is made of two classes of yogis : the hidden and the known. Those who have renounced the world are 'known' yogis : all recognize them. But the 'hidden' yogis live in the world. They are not known. They are like the maidservant who performs her duties in the house but whose mind is fixed on her children in the country. They are also, as I have told you, like the loose woman who performs her household duties zealously but whose mind constantly dwells on her lover. It is very hard to cultivate discrimination and dispassion. It is not easy to get rid of the idea, 'I am the master and all these are mine.' I saw a deputy magistrate, who earns a salary of eight hundred rupees, paying no attention to a religious discourse. He had brought one of his children with him and was busy finding a good place for him to sit. I know another man, whom I shall not name, who used to devote a great deal of time to japa ; but he bore false witness in court for the sake of ten thousand rupees. Therefore I say that a man can realize God in the world, too, but only if he has discrimination and dispassion."

GIRISH : " What will happen to this sinner ? "

Sri Ramakrishna sang in a tender voice, turning his eyes upward :

Meditate on the Lord, the Slayer of hell's dire woes.  
He who removes the fear of death ;  
Thinking of Him, the soul is freed from worldly grief  
And sails across the sea of life in the twinkling of an eye.

Consider, O my mind, why you have come to earth ;  
What gain is there in evil thoughts and deeds ?  
Your way lies not through these : perform your penance here  
By meditating long and deep on the Everlasting Lord.

MASTER : " 'Sails across the sea of life in the twinkling of an eye.' One attains the vision of God if Mahamaya steps aside from the door. Mahamaya's

grace is necessary : hence the worship of Sakti. You see, God is near us, but it is not possible to know Him because Mahamaya stands between. Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita were walking along. Rama walked ahead, Sita in the middle, and Lakshmana last. Lakshmana was only two and a half cubits away from Rama, but he couldn't see Rama because Sita—Mahamaya—was in the way.

"While worshipping God, one should assume a definite attitude. I have three attitudes : the attitude of a child, the attitude of a maidservant, and the attitude of a friend. For a long time I regarded myself as a maidservant and a woman companion of God ; at that time I used to wear skirts and ornaments, like a woman. The attitude of a child is very good.

"The attitude of a 'hero' is not good. Some people cherish it. They regard themselves as Purusha and woman as Prakriti ; they want to propitiate woman through intercourse with her. But this method often causes disaster."

GIRISH : "At one time I too cherished that idea."

Sri Ramakrishna looked at Girish pensively.

GIRISH : "I still have that twist in my mind. Tell me what I should do."

Sri Ramakrishna reflected a minute and said, "Give God your power of attorney. Let Him do whatever He likes."

The conversation then turned to Sri Ramakrishna's young devotees.

MASTER (*to Girish and the others*) : "In meditation I see the inner traits of these youngsters. They have no thought of acquiring house and property. They do not crave sex pleasure. Those of the youngsters who are married do not sleep with their wives. The truth is that unless a man has got rid of rajas and has acquired sattva, he cannot steadily dwell in God ; he cannot love God and realize Him."

GIRISH : "You have blessed me."

MASTER : "How is that ? I said that you would succeed if you were sincere."

Saying this, the Master exclaimed, "Anandamayi !" and went into samadhi. He remained in that state a long time. Regaining partial consciousness, he said, "Where are those rascals ?" M. brought Baburam to him. Sri Ramakrishna looked at Baburam and the other devotees and said, still in ecstasy, "The bliss of Satchidananda is indeed good ; but what about the bliss of divine inebriation ?"

He began to sing :

Once for all, this time, I have thoroughly understood ;

From One who knows it well, I have learnt the secret of bhava. . . .

Again he sang :

Why should I go to Ganga or Gaya, to Kasi, Kanchi, or Prabhas,

So long as I can breathe my last with Kali's name upon my lips ? . . .

The Master continued, saying, "While praying to the Divine Mother, I said, 'O Mother, I don't seek anything else : give me only pure love for Thee.'"

Sri Ramakrishna was pleased with Girish's calm mood. He said to him, "This mood of yours is good ; the calm mood is the best."

The Master was seated in the manager's room. A man entered and said, "Will you see the farce, 'The Confusion of Marriage'? It is being played now."

Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish: "What have you done? This farce after the life of Prahlada! First sweets and rice pudding and then a dish of bitter herbs!"

After the theatre, the actresses, following Girish's instructions, came to the room to salute Sri Ramakrishna. They bowed before him, touching the ground with their foreheads. The devotees noticed that some of the actresses, in saluting the Master, touched his feet. He said to them very tenderly, "Please don't do that, mother!"

After the actresses had left the room, Sri Ramakrishna said to the devotees, "It is all He, only in different forms."

The carriage was ready at the door. Girish and the others came to the street to see the Master off. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna stepped into the carriage, he went into deep samadhi. Narayan and several other devotees were with him. The carriage started for Dakshineswar.

*Saturday, December 27, 1884*

It was the Christmas season. Taking advantage of the holiday, many devotees came to the temple garden to visit the Master, some of them arriving in the morning. Among these were Kedar, Ram, Nityagopal, Tarak, Surendra, M., Sarada Prasanna, and a number of young devotees. This was Sarada Prasanna's first visit.

MASTER (to M.): "Where is Bankim? Haven't you brought him with you?"

Bankim was a schoolboy whom Sri Ramakrishna had met in Baghbazar. Noticing him even from a distance, the Master had said that he was a fine boy.

After a while Sri Ramakrishna went to the Panchavati with the devotees. They surrounded him, some sitting and some standing. He was seated on the cement platform around the tree, facing the southwest. He asked M, with a smile, "Have you brought the book?"

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "Read a little to me."

The devotees were eager to know the name of the book. It was called *Devi Choudhurani*. The Master had heard that the book dealt with motiveless action. He had also heard of the great renown of its author, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, whom he had met some days before, and he wanted to gauge the author's mind from the book.

M. said: "A young girl—the heroine—fell into the hands of a robber named Bhavani Pathak. Her name had been Prafulla, but the robber changed it to 'Devi Choudhurani'. At heart Bhavani was a good man. He made Prafulla go through many spiritual disciplines; he also taught her how to perform selfless action. He robbed wicked people and with that money fed the poor and helpless. He said to Prafulla, 'I chastise the wicked and protect the virtuous.'"

MASTER: "But that is a king's duty."

M : " In one place the author writes of bhakti. Bhavani Pathak sent a girl named Nishi to keep Prafulla company. Nishi was full of piety and looked on Krishna as her husband. Prafulla was already married ; she had lost her father and lived with her mother. The neighbours had created a scandal about her character and avoided her, and so her father-in-law had not allowed her to live with his son. Later her husband had married again ; but Prafulla was extremely devoted to her husband.

(To Sri Ramakrishna) " Now, sir, you can follow the story."

M. read :

NISHI : " I am a daughter of Bhavani Pathak. He is my father. He has also, in a way, given me in marriage."

PRAFULLA : " What do you mean ? "

NISHI : " I have surrendered my all to Krishna."

PRAFULLA : " How is that ? "

NISHI : " My beauty, youth, and soul."

PRAFULLA : " Then He is your husband."

NISHI : " Yes, because he alone is my husband who completely possesses me."

PRAFULLA (with a sigh) : " I do not know. You talk that way because you do not know what a husband is. If you had a real husband, you could never have liked Sri Krishna."

The foolish Brajeswar—Prafulla's husband—was unaware that his wife loved him so much.

NISHI : " All can love Sri Krishna, because He has infinite beauty, infinite youth, and infinite splendour."

This young lady was a disciple of Bhavani and well-versed in logic. But Prafulla was illiterate ; she could not answer Nishi's arguments. But the writers of the Hindu social laws knew the reply. God is infinite, no doubt ; but one cannot keep the infinite in the small cage of the heart. One can do so only with the finite. Therefore the infinite Creator of the universe is worshipped by the Hindu in the cage of his heart as Sri Krishna, the finite Personal God. The husband of a woman has a still more definite form. Therefore if the wife cherishes pure conjugal love, the husband becomes the first step toward God. Hence the husband is the only Deity to the Hindu woman. Other societies are inferior to Hindu society in this respect.

Prafulla was an ignorant girl ; she could not understand Nishi's arguments. She said, " Friend, I do not understand all these arguments ; but you haven't yet told me your name."

NISHI : " Bhavani Pathak has given me the name of Nishi, Night. I am the sister of Diva, Day. One day I shall introduce my sister to you. Let me continue what I was saying. God alone is the real Husband ; and to a woman the husband is her only God. Sri Krishna is the God of all. Why should we cherish two Deities, two Gods ? If you divide the little bhakti of this small heart, how little there will be ! "

PRAFULLA : " Don't be silly. Is there any limit to a woman's bhakti ? "

NISHI : " There is no end to a woman's love. But bhakti is one thing, and love another."

Summarizing part of the book, M. said that Bhavani initiated Prafulla into spiritual life,



He continued reading :

During the first year Bhavani did not allow any man to enter Prafulla's house nor did he allow her to speak to any man outside the house. During the second year the rule about speaking was withdrawn, but no man was allowed inside her house. In the third year Prafulla shaved her head. Now Bhavani allowed his select disciples to see her. The shaven-headed disciple would converse with them on scriptural topics, keeping her eyes cast on the ground.

M. then read that Prafulla began the study of the scriptures ; that she finished grammar and read *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumara Sambhava*, *Sakuntala*, and *Naishadha* ; and that she studied a little of the Samkhya, Vedanta, and Nyaya philosophies.

MASTER : " Do you know what that means ? People like the author of this book believe that knowledge is impossible without the study of books. They think that first comes the knowledge of books and then comes the knowledge of God. In order to know God one must read books ! But if I want to know Jadu Mallick, must I first know the number of his houses and the amount of money he has in government securities ? Do I really need all this information ? Rather I should somehow enter his house, be it by flattering his gate-keepers or by disregarding their rough treatment, and talk to Jadu Mallick himself. Then, if I want to know about his wealth or possessions, I shall only have to ask him about them. Then it will be a very easy matter for me. First comes Rama, then His riches, that is, the universe. This is why Valmiki repeated the mantra, 'mara'. 'Ma' means God, and 'ra' the world, that is to say, His riches."

The devotees listened to the Master's words with rapt attention.

M. continued with the story of Prafulla :

Prafulla finished her studies and then practised spiritual austerity for many days. Then one day Bhavani visited her ; he wanted to instruct her about selfless work. He quoted to her from the *Gita* : "Therefore do thou always perform obligatory actions without attachment ; by performing action without attachment one attains to the highest."

He told her the three characteristics of disinterested action : first, control of the sense-organs ; second, absence of egotism ; and third, surrendering the fruit of action to Sri Krishna. He further told her that no dharma is possible for the egotistic person. Quoting from the *Gita*, he said : "The gunas of Prakriti perform all action. With the understanding deluded by egotism, man thinks, I am the doer."

Bhavani next spoke to her about surrendering the fruit of action to Sri Krishna. Again he quoted from the *Gita* : "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerity thou practisest, O son of Kunti, do that as an offering unto Me."

MASTER : "This is fine. These are the words of the *Gita* ; one cannot refute them. But something else must be noted. The author speaks about surrendering the fruit of action to Sri Krishna, but not about cultivating bhakti for Him."

M : " No, that is not especially mentioned here.

" Next Prafulla and Bhavani talked about the use of money. Prafulla said that she offered all her wealth to Krishna."

M, read from the book again.

PRAFULLA : " Like my actions, I offer all my wealth to Sri Krishna."

BHAVANI : " All ?"

PRAFULLA : " Yes, all."

BHAVANI : " In that case you won't be able to perform action in a detached spirit. If you have to work to earn your food, you will be attached to that work. Hence there are two alternatives before you : either you will have to get your food by begging, or you will have to live on your money. Even a beggar becomes attached to the alms he receives ; therefore you must use your own money to maintain your body."

M. (*to the Master, smiling*) : " That is the nature of the calculating mind."

MASTER : " Yes, that is the nature of the calculating mind ; that is the way the worldly man thinks. But he who seeks God plunges headlong ; he doesn't calculate about how much or how little he needs for the protection of his body."

M : " Next Bhavani asked Prafulla, ' How will you offer all this money to Sri Krishna ? ' Prafulla said : ' Why, Sri Krishna dwells in all beings. I shall distribute the money among them.' Bhavani answered, ' Good ! Good ! '

" Quoting from the *Gita*, Bhavani said : ' He who sees Me in all things and all things in Me, never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him. That yogi who, established in unity, worships Me dwelling in all beings, abides in Me, whatever his mode of life. O Arjuna, that yogi is regarded as the highest who judges the pleasure and pain of all beings by the same standard that he applies to himself.'"

MASTER : " These are the characteristics of the highest bhakta."

M, again read from the book :

A man must work hard if he wants to help all beings with charity. Hence it is necessary for him to make a little display of clothes, of pomp and luxury. Therefore Bhavani said, " A little shopkeeping is necessary."

MASTER (*sharply*) : " ' A little shopkeeping is necessary ' ! One speaks as one thinks. If a man thinks of worldly things day and night, and deals with people hypocritically, then his words are coloured by his thoughts. If one eats radish, one belches radish. Instead of talking about ' shopkeeping ', he should rather have said, ' A man should act as if he were the doer, knowing very well that he is really not the doer.' The other day a man was singing here. The song contained words like ' profit ' and ' loss '. I stopped him. If one contemplates a particular subject day and night, one cannot talk of anything else."

The reading continued. The author was describing the realization of God. Prafulla had become Devi Choudhurani. It was the month of Vaisakh. Devi was seated on the roof of her house-boat talking with Diva and another

woman companion. The moon was up. The boat had cast anchor in the Ganges. The conversation turned to the question of whether one could see God. Devi said, "As the aroma of a flower is directly perceived by the nose, so God is directly perceived by the mind."

At this point the Master interrupted and said: "Yes, God is directly perceived by the mind, but not by this ordinary mind. It is the pure mind that perceives God, and at that time this ordinary mind does not function. A mind that has the slightest trace of attachment to the world cannot be called pure. When all the impurities of the mind are removed, you may call that mind Pure Mind or Pure Atman."

M: "The author says a little later that God cannot easily be perceived by the mind. He says that one needs a telescope to have that direct vision. Yoga is the telescope. Yoga, as it is described in the *Gita*, is of three kinds: jnana, bhakti, and karma. One is able to see God through this telescope of yoga."

MASTER: "That is very good. These are the words of the *Gita*."

M: "At last Devi Choudhurani met her husband. She showed him great devotion and said to him: 'You are my God. I wanted to learn the worship of another God but I did not succeed. You have taken the place of all gods.'"

MASTER (*smiling*): "'I did not succeed.' This is the dharma of a woman totally devoted to her husband. This also is a path."

The reading was over. The Master was smiling. The devotees looked at him, eagerly waiting to hear what he would say.

MASTER (*to the devotees, smiling*): "This is not so bad; it is called the dharma of chastity, the single-minded devotion of a wife to her husband. If God can be worshipped through an image, why shouldn't it be possible to worship Him through a living person? It is God Himself who sports in the world as men."

"Oh, what a state I passed through! I passed some days absorbed in Siva and Durga, some days absorbed in Radha and Krishna, and some days absorbed in Sita and Rama. Assuming Radha's attitude, I would cry for Krishna, and assuming Sita's attitude, I would cry for Rama."

"But lila is by no means the last word. Passing through all these states, I said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, in these states there is separation. Give me a state where there is no separation.' Then I remained for some time absorbed in the Indivisible Satchidananda. I removed the pictures of the gods and goddesses from my room. I began to perceive God in all beings. Formal worship dropped away. You see that bel-tree. I used to go there to pluck its leaves. One day, as I plucked a leaf, a bit of the bark came off. I found the tree full of Consciousness. I felt grieved because I had hurt the tree. One day I tried to pluck some durva grass, but I found I couldn't do it very well. Then I forced myself to pluck it."

"I cannot cut a lemon. The other day I managed to cut one only with great difficulty; I chanted the name of Kali and cut the fruit as they slaughter an animal before the Goddess. One day I was about to gather some flowers."

They were everywhere on the trees. At once I had a vision of Virat ; it appeared that His worship was just over. The flowers looked like a bouquet placed on the head of the Deity. I could not pluck them.

"God sports through man as well. I see man as the embodiment of Narayana. As fire is kindled when you rub two pieces of wood together, so God can be seen in man if you have intense devotion. If there is suitable bait, big fish like carp gulp it down at once. When one is intoxicated with prema, one sees God in all beings. The gopis saw Krishna in everything ; to them the whole world was filled with Krishna. They said that they themselves were Krishna. They were then in a God-intoxicated state. Looking at the trees, they said, 'These are hermits absorbed in meditation on Krishna.' Looking at the grass they said, 'The hair of the earth is standing on end at the touch of Krishna.'

"Devotion to the husband is also a dharma. The husband is God. Why shouldn't it be so ? If God can be worshipped through an image, why not also through a living man ? But three things are necessary in order to feel the presence of God in an image: first, the devotion of the priest ; second, a beautiful image ; and third, the devotion of the householder. Vaishnavcharan once said that in the end the mind of the devotee is absorbed in the human manifestation of God.

"But you must remember one thing. One cannot see God sporting as man unless one has had the vision of Him. Do you know the sign of one who has God-vision ? Such a man acquires the nature of a child. Why a child ? Because God is like a child. So he who sees God becomes like a child.

"God-vision is necessary. Now the question is, how can one get it ? Intense renunciation is the means. A man should have such intense yearning for God that he can say, 'O Father of the universe, am I outside Your universe ? Won't You be kind to me, You wretch ?'

"You partake of the nature of him on whom you meditate. By worshipping Siva you acquire the nature of Siva. A devotee of Rama meditated on Hanuman day and night. He used to think he had become Hanuman. In the end he was firmly convinced that he had even grown a little tail. Jnana is the characteristic of Siva, and bhakti of Vishnu. One who partakes of Siva's nature becomes a jnani, and one who partakes of Vishnu's nature becomes a bhakta."

M : "But what about Chaitanyadeva ? You said he had both knowledge and devotion."

MASTER (*sharply*) : "His case was different. He was an Incarnation of God. There is a great difference between him and an ordinary man. The fire of Chaitanya's renunciation was so great that when Sarvabhauma poured sugar on his tongue, instead of melting, it evaporated into air. He was always absorbed in samadhi. How great was his conquest of lust ! To compare him with a man ! A lion eats meat and yet it mates only once in twelve years ; but a sparrow eats grain and it indulges in sex-life day and night. Such is the difference between a Divine Incarnation and an ordinary human being. An ordinary man renounces lust ; but once in a while he forgets his vow. He cannot control himself.



(To M.) "He who has realized God looks on man as a mere worm. 'One cannot succeed in religious life if one has shame, hatred, or fear.' These are fetters. Haven't you heard of the eight fetters?"

"How can one who is eternally perfect be afraid of the world? He knows how to play his game. An eternally perfect soul can even lead a worldly life if he desires. There are people who can fence with two swords at the same time; they are such expert fencers that, if stones are thrown at them, the stones hit the swords and come back."

A DEVOTEE: "Sir, how can one see God?"

MASTER: "Can you ever see God if you do not direct your whole mind toward Him? The *Bhagavata* speaks about Sukadeva. When he walked about he looked like a soldier with fixed bayonet. His gaze did not wander; it had only one goal and that was God. This is the meaning of yoga.

"The chatak bird drinks only rain-water. Though the Ganges, the Jamuna, the Godavari, and all other rivers are full of water, and though the seven oceans are full to the brim, still the chatak will not touch them. It will drink only the water that falls from the clouds.

"He who has developed such yoga can see God. In the theatre the audience remains engaged in all kinds of conversation, about home, office, and school, till the curtain goes up; but no sooner does it go up than all conversation comes to a stop, and the people watch the play with fixed attention. If after a long while someone utters a word or two, it is about the play.

"After a drunkard has drunk his liquor he talks only about the joy of drunkenness."

Nityagopal was seated in front of Sri Ramakrishna. He was always in ecstasy. He sat there in silence.

MASTER (to Nityagopal, smiling): "Gopal! Why are you always silent?"

Nityagopal answered like a child, "I—do—not—know."

MASTER: "I understand why you don't say anything; perhaps you are afraid of committing a transgression. You are right. Jaya and Vijaya were gate-keepers for Narayana. They refused Sanaka, Sanatana, and other rishis admission into His palace. For this transgression Jaya and Vijaya had to be born three times on earth.

"Again, there is the instance of Sridama; he was Viraja's gate-keeper in Goloka. Sri Krishna was in Viraja's house. Radhika went there to surprise Krishna and wanted to enter the house. Sridama would not admit her, and so Radhika cursed him to be born as a demon on earth. But Sridama, too, cursed her.

"But there is one thing you should remember. When a boy walks holding his father's hand, he may fall into the gutter; but what has he to fear if the father holds him by the hand?"

The story of Sridama is narrated in the *Brahmavaiivarta Purana*.

Kedar, who was a government official, had been living at Dacca for some time. He had been transferred there from Calcutta. He was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and had gathered together at Dacca many devotees, who

<sup>2</sup> A woman companion of Krishna.

came to him regularly for spiritual instruction. As one should not come empty-handed to a religious man, the devotees would bring Kedar sweets and other offerings.

KEDAR (*to the Master, humbly*) : "Should I eat those offerings?"

MASTER : "It won't injure you if the offerings are given out of love for God. But they are harmful if they are given with any selfish motive."

KEDAR : "I have explained everything to the devotees and now I feel relieved. I have told them that he<sup>3</sup> who has given me his blessing knows all."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "That is true. You see, people of all sorts come here. So they find here different things."

KEDAR : "I do not need to know different things."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Why not? One should know a little of everything. If a man starts a grocery-shop, he keeps all kinds of articles there, including a little lentil and tamarind. An expert musician knows how to play a little on all instruments."

Sri Ramakrishna left the room and went toward the pine-grove. The devotees began to walk about in the garden. Several went to the Panchavati. Sri Ramakrishna met them there and said : "I have indigestion. I took a meal at the Mallicks'. They are very worldly people."

A few of the Master's personal things lay scattered on the cement platform of the Panchavati, and he asked M. to bring them. He proceeded to his room and the devotees followed.

In the afternoon the Master rested awhile. Afterwards a few devotees arrived. The Master sat on the small couch reclining against a pillow.

A DEVOTEE : "Sir, can one know God's attributes through the intellect?"

MASTER : "Certainly not by this ordinary intellect. Can one know God so easily? One must practise sadhana. One must also adopt a particular attitude toward God, for instance, the attitude of a servant toward his master. The rishis of old had the attitude of santa. Do you know the attitude of the jnanis? It is to meditate on one's own Self. (*To a devotee, with a smile*) What is your attitude?"

The devotee gave no answer.

MASTER (*smiling*) : "You have two attitudes : you meditate on your own Self and also cherish toward God the attitude of a servant. Am I not right?"

DEVOTEE (*hesitating and smiling*) : "Yes, sir."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "You see, as Hāzra says, I can read people's thoughts."

"One can maintain those two attitudes only at a very advanced stage. Prahlada maintained them. But one must work hard in order to practise this ideal."

"Let me give an illustration. Suppose a man is grasping the thorny branch of a plum-tree. His hand bleeds profusely ; but he says, 'There is nothing the matter with me ; I am not hurt.' If you ask him about his wound, he will say, 'It's all right ; I am quite well.' Now is there any meaning in the mere utterance of these words? One must practise discipline in keeping with this ideal."

The devotees were giving their whole attention to what the Master was saying.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Ramakrishna.

## XXXVI

### THE MASTER'S BIRTHDAY

*Sunday, February 22, 1885*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting on the northeast verandah outside his room at Dakshineswar. It was about eight o'clock in the morning. Many devotees, including Narendra, Rakhal, Girish, Baburam, and Surendra, were present. They were celebrating the Master's birthday, which had fallen on the previous Monday. M. arrived and saluted him. The Master signed to him to take a seat near him.

Narottam was singing kirtan. Sri Ramakrishna was in partial ecstasy. The subject was Krishna's meeting with His cowherd friends in the meadow. Krishna had not yet arrived. The cowherd boys were restless for Him. One of them said that Mother Yasoda was preventing Krishna from coming. Balai said in a determined voice that he would bring Krishna with the sound of his horn. Balai's love for Krishna knew no bounds. The music went on. The cowherd boys and girls heard Krishna's flute and were filled with spiritual emotion.

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna's eyes fell on Narendra, who was sitting very near him. He stood up and went into samadhi; he stood there touching Narendra's knee with his foot. Regaining consciousness he took his seat again. Narendra left the room. The music went on.

Sri Ramakrishna whispered to Baburam: "There is kshir in the room. Give Narendra some."

Did the Master see Narendra as the embodiment of God?

After the kirtan Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room. Tenderly he began to feed Narendra with sweets.

It was Girish's belief that God Himself had been born in the person of Sri Ramakrishna.

GIRISH (*to the Master*): "Your ways are like Krishna's. He too pretended many things to His mother Yasoda."

MASTER: "True. It was because Krishna was an Incarnation of God. When God is born as a man He acts that way. You see, Krishna easily lifted the hill of Govardhan with His hand, but He made Nanda believe that He found it very hard to carry a footstool."

GIRISH: "Yes, sir, I have understood you now."

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch. It was about eleven o'clock. Ram and the other devotees wanted to dress him in a new cloth. The Master said, "No, no." Pointing to an English-educated man, he said, "What will he say about it?" At the earnest request of the devotees he said, "Well, since you insist, I shall have to agree."

The devotees were arranging the Master's meal in the room. He asked Narendra to sing.

Narendra sang :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;  
Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave.  
In the lap of boundless dark, on Mahanirvana's waves upborne,  
Peace flows serene and inexhaustible.  
Taking the form of the Void, in the robe of darkness wrapped,  
Who art Thou, Mother, seated alone in the shrine of samadhi ?  
From the Lotus of Thy fear-scattering Feet flash Thy love's  
lightnings ;  
Thy Spirit-Face shines forth with laughter terrible and loud !

As Narendra sang the line, "Who art Thou, Mother, seated alone in the shrine of samadhi?", Sri Ramakrishna went into deep samadhi and lost all outer consciousness. After a long time, when he was regaining partial consciousness, the devotees seated him on the carpet and placed a plate of food before him. Still overcome with divine emotion, he began to eat the rice with both hands. He said to Bhavanath, "Feed me." Because of his ecstatic mood he could not use his own right hand. Bhavanath began to feed him. Sri Ramakrishna could eat very little. Ram said to him, "Nityagopal will eat from your plate."

MASTER : "Why from my plate ? Why ?"

RAM : "Why not ?"

Nityagopal was also in an ecstatic mood. The Master put a morsel or two into his mouth with his own hand.

Some devotees from Konnagar arrived by boat. They entered Sri Ramakrishna's room singing kirtan ; afterwards they went out to take some refreshments. Narottam was in the room. The Master said to him and the other devotees : "The music of the Konnagar devotees was dull. Music should be so lively as to make everyone dance. One should sing a song like this :

See how all Nadia is shaking  
Under the waves of Gauranga's love !

And along with it these lines :

Behold, the two brothers<sup>1</sup> have come, who weep while chanting  
Hari's name,  
The brothers who, in return for blows, offer to sinners Hari's  
love. . . .

And these too :

Gaur and Nitai, ye blessed brothers !  
I have heard how kind you are,  
And therefore I have come to you. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Gauranga and Nityananda.



The devotees were taking the prasād. It was a sumptuous feast. Sri Ramakrishna said to M. : "Haven't you invited the Mukherjis ? Ask Surendra to feed the musicians."

Bepin Sarkar arrived. The devotees introduced him to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna sat up and said to the devotees, "Give him a seat and some betel-leaf." He said to Bepin humbly : "I am sorry not to be able to talk to you. There is a great crowd today."

Pointing to Girindra, Sri Ramakrishna said to Baburam, "Give him a carpet." Nityagopal was sitting on the floor. The Master asked a devotee to give him a carpet too.

Physician Mahendra of Sinthi arrived. The Master, smiling, asked Rakhal by a sign to have the physician examine his pulse.

Turning to Ramlal, the Master said, "Be friendly with Girish Ghosh ; then you will get a free ticket to the theatre."

Narendra had been talking a long time with Hazra on the porch. Since his father's death Narendra had been having financial worries. He entered the room and took a seat.

MASTER (to Narendra) : "Were you with Hazra ? Both of you are in the same boat. You know the saying about the two friends : 'You are away from your country and he is away from his beloved.' Hazra, too, needs fifteen hundred rupees. (Laughter.)

"Hazra says : 'Narendra has acquired one hundred per cent sattva, though still there is in him a pink glow of rajas. But I have one hundred and twenty-five per cent pure sattva.' (All laugh.)

"I say to Hazra, 'You indulge in reasoning only : that is why you are so dry.' He retorts, 'No, I am dry because I drink the nectar of the sun.'

"Speaking of pure bhakti, I say to Hazra, 'A real devotee does not pray to God for money or riches.' Hazra replies : 'When the flood of divine grace descends, the rivers overflow ; and further, the pools and canals are filled. By the grace of God one gets not only pure devotion but also the six super-natural powers, and money too.'"

Narendra and many other devotees were seated on the floor. Girish entered the room and joined them.

MASTER (to Girish) : "I look on Narendra as Atman. I obey him."

GIRISH : "Is there anyone you don't obey ?"

MASTER (smiling) : "He has a manly nature and I have the nature of a woman. He is a noble soul and belongs to the realm of the Indivisible Brahman."

Girish went out to have a smoke.

NARENDRA (to the Master) : "I had a talk with Girish Ghosh. He is indeed a great man. We talked about you."

MASTER : "What did you say about me ?"

NARENDRA : "That you are illiterate and we are scholars. Oh, we talked in that vein !" (Laughter.)

MANI MALLICK (to the Master) : "You have become a pundit without reading a book."

MASTER (*to Narendra and the others*) : " Let me tell you this : really and truly I don't feel sorry in the least that I haven't read the Vedanta or the other scriptures. I know that the essence of the Vedanta is that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. And what is the essence of the *Gita* ? It is what you get by repeating the word ten times. Then it is reversed into 'tagi', which refers to renunciation. The pupil should hear the essence of the scriptures from the guru ; then he should practise austerity and devotions. A man needs the letter he has received from home as long as he has not learnt its contents. After reading it, however, he sets out to get the things he has been asked to send. Likewise, what need is there of the scriptures if you know their essence ? The next thing is the practice of spiritual discipline."

Girish entered the room.

MASTER (*to Girish*) : " Hello ! What were you saying about me ? I eat, drink, and make merry."

GIRISH : " What should we have been saying about you ? Are you a holy man ? "

MASTER : " No, nothing of the sort. Truly I do not feel I am a holy man."

GIRISH : " I am not your equal even in joking."

MASTER : " I once went to Jaygopal Sen's garden house wearing a red-bordered cloth. Keshab was there. Looking at the red borders Keshab said : ' What's this ? Such a flash of colour today ! Such a display of red borders ! ' I said, ' I have to cast a spell on Keshab ; hence this display.' "

Narendra was going to sing again. Sri Ramakrishna asked M. to take down the tanpura from the wall. Narendra was a long time tuning it. The Master and the devotees became impatient. Binode said, " He will tune it today and sing another day." (*Laughter.*)

Sri Ramakrishna laughed. He said : " I feel like breaking the tanpura to pieces ! What is this ? Only ' Tong—tong ' ! Then he will practise : ' Tananana—nere-num ' ! "

BHAVANATH : " Everybody feels annoyed like this before a musical performance begins."

NARENDRA (*still tuning*) : " If you don't understand it."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " There ! He explains away our complaints ! "

Narendra began to sing. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the small couch. Nityagopal and the other devotees were on the floor.

Narendra sang :

O Mother, Thou my Inner Guide, ever awake within my heart !

Day and night Thou holdest me in Thy lap.

Why dost Thou show such tenderness to this unworthy child of Thine ? . . .

Then he sang :

O my lute of a single string !

Sing the blessed Mother's name,

For she is the solace of my soul. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The sound of a stringed instrument.

And Again :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;  
Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave. . . .

In an ecstatic mood Sri Ramakrishna came down and sat by Narendra's side. He began to talk, still in ecstasy.

MASTER : " Shall I sing ? Fie ! (*To Nityagopal*) What do you say ? One should listen to singing to awaken the inner spirit. Nothing matters afterwards.

" He has kindled the fire. That is nice. Now all is silence. That's nice too. I am silent ; you be silent too. The thing is to dive into the Elixir of Bliss.

" Shall I sing ? Well, I may. Water is water whether it is still or in waves."

Narendra was seated near the Master. He was constantly worried about his financial difficulties at home. He was now twenty-three years old. Sri Ramakrishna looked at him intently.

MASTER (*to Narendra, smiling*) : " Undoubtedly you are 'Kha'. But you have to worry about 'taxes' ; that's the trouble."

By "taxes" the Master meant Narendra's financial difficulties at home.

MASTER : " Krishnakishore used to say that he was 'Kha'. One day I visited him at his home and found him worried. He wouldn't talk to me freely. I asked him : 'What's the matter ? Why are you brooding like this ?' Krishnakishore said : 'The tax-collector came today. He said my pots and pans would be sold at auction if I didn't pay my taxes. That's what I am worrying about.' I laughed and said : 'How is that ? You are surely 'Kha', the akasa. Let the rascals take away your pots and pans. What is that to you ?'

(*To Narendra*) "So I am saying that you are 'Kha'. Why are you so worried ? Don't you know that Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'If you have one of the eight siddhis, you may get a little power, but you will not realize Me.' By siddhis one may acquire powers, strength, money, and such things, but not God.

"Let me tell you something else. Go beyond knowledge and ignorance. People say that such and such a one is a jnani ; but in reality it is not so. Vasishtha was a great jnani, but even he was stricken with grief on account of the death of his sons. At this Lakshmana said to Rama : 'This is amazing, Rama. Even Vasishtha is so grief-stricken !' Rama said : 'Brother, he who has knowledge has ignorance as well. He who is aware of light is also aware of darkness. He who knows good also knows bad. He who knows happiness also knows misery. Brother, go beyond duality, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond knowledge and ignorance.' (*To Narendra*) So I am asking you to go beyond both knowledge and ignorance."

Sri Ramakrishna went back to his small couch. The devotees were seated on the floor. Surendra sat by his side. The Master cast an affectionate look on him and began to give him advice.

MASTER (*to Surendra*) : "Come here every now and then. Nangta used to say that a brass pot must be polished every day ; otherwise it gets stained. One should constantly live in the company of holy men.

"The renunciation of 'woman and gold' is for sannyasis. It is not for you. Now and then you should go into solitude and call on God with a yearning heart. Your renunciation should be mental.

"Unless a devotee is of the heroic type he cannot pay attention to both God and the world. King Janaka lived a householder's life only after attaining perfection through austerity and prayer. He fenced with two swords, the one of Knowledge and the other of action."

The Master sang :

This very world is a mansion of mirth ;  
Here I can eat, here drink and make merry.  
Janaka's might was unsurpassed ;  
What did he lack of the world or the Spirit ?  
Holding to one as well as the other,  
He drank his milk from a brimming cup !

MASTER : "For you, as Chaitanya said, the disciplines to be practised are kindness to living beings, service to the devotees, and chanting the name of God.

(To Surendra) "Why do I say all this to you ? You work in a merchant's office. I say this to you because you have many duties to perform there.

"You tell lies at the office. Then why do I eat the food you offer me ? Because you give your money in charity ; you give away more than you earn. 'The seed of the melon is bigger than the fruit', as the saying goes.

"I cannot eat anything offered by miserly people. Their wealth is squandered in these ways : first, litigation ; second, thieves and robbers ; third, physicians ; fourth, their wicked children's extravagance. It is like that.

"Your giving money away in charity is very good. Those who have money should give in charity. The miser's wealth is spirited away, but the money of the charitable person is saved. He spends it for a righteous purpose. At Kamarpukur I have seen the farmers cutting channels to irrigate their fields. Sometimes the water rushes in with such force that the ridges around the fields are washed away and the crops destroyed. For this reason the farmers make holes here and there in the ridges. Since the water escapes through the holes, the ridges are not destroyed by the rush of the water. Furthermore, the escaping water deposits soft clay in the fields, which increases their fertility and gives a richer crop. He who gives away in charity achieves great results. He achieves the four fruits : dharma, artha, kama, and moksha."

The devotees listened with great attention to Sri Ramakrishna's words.

SURENDRA : "I cannot meditate well. I repeat the Divine Monther's name now and then. Lying in bed, I repeat Her name and fall asleep."

MASTER : "That is enough. You remember Her, don't you ?

"There are two kinds of yoga : manoyoga and karmayoga. To perform, following the guru's instructions, such pious acts as worship, pilgrimage, and service to living beings is called karmayoga. The duties that Janaka performed are also called karmayoga. The meditation and contemplation of the yogis is called manoyoga.



"Sometimes I say to myself in the Kali temple, 'O Mother, the mind is nothing but Yourself.' Therefore Pure Mind, Pure Buddhi, and Pure Atman are one and the same thing."

It was about dusk. Many of the devotees saluted Sri Ramakrishna and started to go home. The Master went to the west porch. Bhavanath and M. were with him.

MASTER (to Bhavanath): "Why do you come here so seldom?"

BHAVANATH (smiling): "Sir, I visit you once in a fortnight. I saw you in the street the other day, so I didn't come here."

MASTER: "What do you mean? What can you gain by mere seeing? Touch and talk are also necessary."

The evening worship had begun in the temples. It was the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the moon; the temple domes, the courtyard, the gardens, and the trees were shining in the moonlight. The Ganges was flowing north with a murmuring sound. Sri Ramakrishna sat on the small couch in his room absorbed in contemplation of the Divine Mother.

The evening worship was over. One or two devotees were still in the temple garden. Narendra had left. Sri Ramakrishna was pacing the verandah northeast of his room. M. stood there looking at him. Suddenly he said to M., "Ah, how sweet Narendra's music is!"

M: "Yes, sir. That song beginning with 'In dense darkness' is particularly beautiful."

MASTER: "You are right. That song has a deep meaning. A part of my mind is still drawn to it."

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "Meditation in darkness is prescribed in the Tantra."

Girish Ghosh came and stood by Sri Ramakrishna, who had started to sing:

Is Kali, my Mother, really black?  
The Naked One, of blackest hue,  
Lights the Lotus of the Heart. . .

Sri Ramakrishna was filled with divine fervour. Standing with one arm resting on Girish's body he sang:

Why should I go to Ganga or Gaya, to Kasi, Kanchi, or Prabhas,  
So long as I can breathe my last with Kali's name upon my lips?  
What need of rituals has a man, what need of devotions any more,  
If he repeats the Mother's name at the three holy hours?  
Rituals may pursue him close, but never can they overtake him. . .

Then he sang:

Once for all, this time, I have thoroughly understood;  
From One<sup>3</sup> who knows it well, I have learnt the secret of bhava.  
A man has come to me from a country where there is no night,  
And now I cannot distinguish day from night any longer;  
Rituals and devotions have all grown profitless for me.

<sup>3</sup> God, whom the poet worshipped as the Divine Mother.

My sleep is broken ; how can I slumber any more ?  
For now I am wide awake in the sleeplessness of yoga.  
O Divine Mother, made one with Thee in yoga-sleep<sup>4</sup> at last,  
My slumber I have lulled asleep for evermore.

I bow my head, says Prasad, before desire and liberation ;  
Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman,  
I have discarded, once for all, both righteousness and sin.

As Sri Ramakrishna looked at Girish, his ecstatic fervour became more intense.

He sang :

I have surrendered my soul at the fearless feet of the Mother ;  
Am I afraid of Death any more ?  
Unto the tuft of hair on my head  
Is tied the almighty mantra, Mother Kali's name.  
My body I have sold in the market-place of the world  
And with it have bought Sri Durga's name. . . .

Intoxicated with God, Sri Ramakrishna repeated the lines :

My body I have sold in the market-place of the world  
And with it have bought Sri Durga's name.

Looking at Girish and M. he said, " Divine fervour fills my body and robs me of consciousness."

" Here ' consciousness' means consciousness of the outer world. One needs the Knowledge of Reality and Brahman.

" Bhakti, love of God, is the only essential thing. One kind of bhakti has a motive behind it. Again, there is a motiveless love, pure devotion, a love of God that seeks no return. Keshab Sen and the members of the Brahmo Samaj didn't know about motiveless love. In this love there is no desire ; it is nothing but pure love of the Lotus Feet of God.

" There is another kind of love, known as *urjita bhakti*, an ecstatic love of God that overflows, as it were. When it is awakened, the devotee ' laughs and weeps and dances and sings '. Chaitanyadeva is an example of this love. Rama said to Lakshmana, ' Brother, if anywhere you see the manifestation of *urjita bhakti*, know for certain that I am there.' "

GIRISH : " Everything is possible through your grace. What was I before ? And see what I am now."

MASTER : " You had latent tendencies ; so they are manifesting themselves now. Nothing happens except at the proper time. Take the case of a patient. Nature has almost cured him, when the physician prescribes a herb and asks him to drink its juice. After taking the medicine he is completely cured. Now, is the patient cured by the medicine, or does he get well by himself ? Who can tell ?

<sup>4</sup> Samadhi, which makes one appear asleep.

"Lakshmana said to Lava and Kusa; 'You are mere children; you don't know Rama's power. At the touch of His feet, Ahalya,<sup>5</sup> who had been turned into a stone, got back her human form.' Lava and Kusa said: 'Revered sir, we know that. We have heard the story. The stone became Ahalya because of the power of the holy man's words. The sage Gautama said to her: "In the Tretayuga, Rama will pass this hermitage. You will become a human being again at the touch of His feet."' Now, who can tell whether the miracle happened in order that the sage's words should be fulfilled or on account of Rama's holiness?"

"Everything happens by the will of God. If your spiritual consciousness has been awakened at this place, know that I am only an instrument. 'Uncle Moon is everybody's uncle.' All happens by the will of God."

GIRISH (*smiling*): "Did you say 'by the will of God'? What I am saying is the very same thing." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*to Girish*): "By being guileless one can speedily realize God. There are several kinds of people who do not attain divine knowledge. First, a man with a perverse mind; he is not guileless. Second, one who is very fastidious about outer purity. Third, a doubting person."

Sri Ramakrishna spoke highly of Nityagopal's ecstasy.

Three or four devotees stood near Sri Ramakrishna on the verandah and listened to his words about the exalted state of the paramahansa. The Master said: "A paramahansa is always conscious that God alone is real and all else illusory. Only the swan has the power to separate milk from a mixture of milk and water. The swan's tongue secretes an acid that separates the milk from the mixture. The paramahansa also possesses such a juice; it is his ecstatic love for God. That separates the Real from the mixture of the Real and the unreal. Through it one becomes aware of God and sees Him."

Wednesday, February 25, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna was at the house of Girish Ghosh in Bosepara Lane, Calcutta. It was about three o'clock when M. arrived and prostrated himself before him. The Master was going to see a play at the Star Theatre. He was talking with the devotees about the Knowledge of Brahman.

MASTER: "Man experiences three states of consciousness: waking, dream, and deep sleep. Those who follow the path of knowledge explain away the three states. According to them, Brahman is beyond the three states. It is also beyond the gross, the subtle, and the causal bodies, and beyond the three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas. All these are maya, like a reflection in a mirror. The reflection is by no means the real substance. Brahman alone is the Substance and all else is illusory."

<sup>5</sup> Rama's two sons.

<sup>6</sup> The beautiful and devoted wife of a great sage named Gautama. Indra, the king of heaven, infatuated with her beauty, seduced her, impersonating her husband. The sage, coming to know of this, cursed her and turned her into a stone; but he said that the touch of Rama's feet would restore her human form. Indra, too, received his share of the curse, as a result of which he had a thousand eruptions on his body. Hence he is known as the "thousand-eyed god".

"The knowers of Brahman say, further, that it is the identification of the soul with the body that creates the notion of duality. In that state of identification the reflection appears real. When this identification disappears, a man realizes, 'I am He ; I am Brahman.'"

A DEVOTEE : "Then shall we all follow the path of reasoning ?"

MASTER : "Reasoning is one of the paths ; it is the path of the Vedantists. But there is another path, the path of bhakti. If a bhakta weeps longingly for the Knowledge of Brahman, he receives that as well.<sup>7</sup> These are the two paths : jnana and bhakti.

"One may attain the Knowledge of Brahman by either path. Some retain bhakti even after realizing Brahman, in order to teach humanity. An Incarnation of God is one of these.

"A man cannot easily get rid of the ego and the consciousness that the body is the soul. It becomes possible only when, through the grace of God, he attains samadhi—nirvikalpa samadhi, jada samadhi.

"The ego of the Incarnations returns to them when they come down from the plane of samadhi ; but then it is the 'ego of Knowledge' or the 'ego of Devotion'. Through the 'ego of Knowledge' they teach men. Sankaracharya kept the 'ego of Knowledge'.

"Through the 'ego of Devotion' Chaitanyadeva tasted divine love and enjoyed the company of the devotees. He talked about God and chanted His name.

"Since one cannot easily get rid of the ego, a bhakta does not explain away the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. He accepts all the states. Further, he accepts the three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas. A bhakta sees that God alone has become the twenty-four cosmic principles, the universe, and all living beings. He also sees that God reveals Himself to His devotees in a tangible form, which is the embodiment of Spirit.

"The bhakta takes shelter under vidyamaya. He seeks holy company, goes on pilgrimage, and practises discrimination, devotion, and renunciation. He says that, since a man cannot easily get rid of his ego, he should let the rascal remain as the servant of God, the devotee of God.

"But a bhakta also attains the Knowledge of Oneness ; he sees that nothing exists but God. He does not regard the world as a dream, but says that it is God Himself who has become everything. In a wax garden you may see various objects, but everything is made of wax.

"But a man realizes this only when his devotion to God has matured. One gets jaundice when too much bile accumulates. Then one sees everything as yellow. From constantly meditating on Krishna, Radhika saw everything as Krishna ; moreover, she even felt that she herself had become Krishna. If a piece of lead is kept in a lake of mercury a long time, it turns into mercury. The cockroach becomes motionless by constantly meditating on the kumira worm ; it loses the power to move. At last it is transformed into a kumira. Similarly, by constantly meditating on God the bhakta loses his ego ; he realizes

<sup>7</sup> Usually the ideal of a bhakta is the vision of the Personal God.



that God is he and he is God. When the cockroach becomes the kumira everything is achieved. Instantly one obtains liberation.

"As long as God retains the ego in a man, he should establish a definite relationship with God, calling on Him as Master, Mother, Friend, or the like. I spent one year as a handmaid—the handmaid of the Divine Mother, the Embodiment of Brahman. I used to dress myself as a woman. I put on a nose-ring. One can conquer lust by assuming the attitude of a woman.

"One must worship the Adyasakti. She must be propitiated. She alone has assumed all female forms. Therefore I look on all women as mother. The attitude of looking on woman as mother is very pure. The Tantra mentions the *vamachara*<sup>3</sup> method also. But that is not a good method ; it causes the aspirant's downfall. A devotee keeping an object of enjoyment near him has reason to be afraid.

"Looking on woman as mother is like fasting on the ekadasi day without touching even a drop of water ; in this attitude there is not the slightest trace of sensual enjoyment. Another way of observing the ekadasi allows the taking of fruit and the like. One can also observe the day by eating luchi and curries ! But my attitude is not to touch even a drop of water while I observe the fast. I worshipped the Shodasi<sup>4</sup> as my mother ; I looked on all parts of her body as those of my mother. This attitude of regarding God as Mother is the last word in sadhana. 'O God, Thou art my Mother and I am Thy child'—this is the last word in spirituality.

"The sannyasi's way of living is like observing the ekadasi fast without taking even a drop of water. If he clings to enjoyment, then he has reason to be afraid. 'Woman and gold' is enjoyment. If a monk enjoys it, he is swallowing his own spittle, as it were. There are different kinds of enjoyment : money, wealth, name, fame, and sense pleasures. It is not good for a sannyasi to sit in the company of a woman devotee, or even to talk to her. This injures him and others as well. Then others cannot learn from him ; he cannot set an example to humanity. A sannyasi keeps his body in order to teach mankind.

"To sit with a woman or talk to her a long time has also been described as a kind of sexual intercourse. There are eight kinds. To listen to a woman and enjoy her conversation is one kind ; to speak about a woman is another kind ; to whisper to her privately is a third kind ; to keep something belonging to a woman and enjoy it is a fourth kind ; to touch her is a fifth. Therefore a sannyasi should not salute his guru's young wife, touching her feet. These are the rules for sannyasis.

"But the case is quite different with householders. After the birth of one or two children, the husband and wife should live as brother and sister. The other seven kinds of sexual intercourse do not injure them much.

"A householder has various debts ; debts to the gods, to the fathers, and to the rishis. He also owes a debt to his wife. He should make her the mother of one or two children and support her if she is a chaste woman.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, "left-hand path". According to this attitude the aspirant seeks to conquer lust by fulfilling its urge.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, "maiden sixteen years old". The worship of a maiden is a discipline prescribed in the Tantra.

"Householders do not know who is a good wife and who is a bad wife, who is a vidyasakti and who is an avidyasakti. A vidyasakti, a good wife, has very little lust and anger. She sleeps little. She pushes her husband's head away from her. She is full of affection, kindness, devotion, modesty, and other noble qualities. Such a wife serves all, looking on all men as her children. Further, she helps increase her husband's love of God. She doesn't spend much money lest her husband should have to work hard and thus not get leisure to think of God.

"Mannish women have different traits. These are bad traits : squint eyes and hollow eyes, catlike eyes, lantern jaws like a calf's, and pigeon-breast."

GIRISH : "What is the way for people like us ?"

MASTER : "Bhakti is the only essential thing. Bhakti has different aspects : the sattvic, the rajasic, and the tamasic. One who has sattvic bhakti is very modest and humble. But a man with tamasic bhakti is like a highwayman in his attitude toward God. He says : 'O God, I am chanting Your name ; how can I be a sinner ? O God, You are my own Mother ; You must reveal Yourself to me.'"

GIRISH (*smiling*) : "It is you, sir, who teach us tamasic bhakti."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "There are certain signs of God-vision. When a man sees God he goes into samadhi. There are five kinds of samadhi. First, he feels the Mahavayu<sup>10</sup> rise like an ant crawling up. Second, he feels It rise like a fish swimming in the water. Third, he feels It rise like a snake wriggling along. Fourth, he feels It rise like a bird flying—flying from one branch to another. Fifth, he feels It rise like a monkey making a big jump ; the Mahavayu reaches the head with one jump, as it were, and samadhi follows.

"There are two other kinds of samadhi. First, the sthita samadhi, when the aspirant totally loses outer consciousness : he remains in that state a long time, it may be for many days. Second, the upmana samadhi : it is to withdraw the mind suddenly from all sense-objects and unite it with God,

(*To M.*) "Do you understand this ?"

M : "Yes, sir."

GIRISH : "Can one realize God by sadhana ?"

MASTER : "People have realized God in various ways. Some through much austerity, worship, and devotion ; they have attained perfection through their own efforts. Some are born perfect, as for example Narada and Sukadeva ; they are called nityasiddha, eternally perfect. There are also those who have attained perfection all of a sudden ; it is like a man's unexpectedly coming into a great fortune." Again, there are instances of people's realizing God in a dream and by divine grace."

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna sang, intoxicated with divine fervour :

Can everyone have the vision of Syama ? Is Kali's treasure for everyone ?

Oh, what a pity my foolish mind will not see what is true ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna remained in ecstasy a few moments. Girish and the other devotees were seated before him. A few days earlier Girish had been very

<sup>10</sup> The great nerve current whose rising is felt in the spinal column.

rude to the Master at the Star Theatre ; but now he was in a calm state of mind.

MASTER (*to Girish*) : " This mood of yours is very good ; it is peaceful. I prayed about you to the Divine Mother, ' O Mother, make him peaceful so that he won't abuse me.' "

GIRISH (*to M.*) : " I feel as if someone were pressing my tongue. I can't talk. "

Sri Ramakrishna was still in an indrawn mood ; he seemed to be gradually forgetting the men and the objects around him. He tried to bring his mind down to the relative world. He looked at the devotees.

Looking at M., he said : " They all come to Dakshineswar. Let them. Mother knows everything. " To a young man of the neighbourhood he said : " Hello ! What do you think ? What is the duty of man ? " All sat in silence. To Narayan he said : " Don't you want to pass the examinations ? But, my dear child, a man freed from bondage is Siva ; entangled in bondage, he is jiva. "

Sri Ramakrishna was still in the God-intoxicated mood. There was a glass of water near him. He drank the water. He said to himself, " Why, I have drunk water in this mood ! "

It was not yet dusk. Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Atul, who was seated in front of him. Atul was Girish's brother and a lawyer of the High Court of Calcutta. A brahmin neighbour was also seated near him.

MASTER (*to Atul*) : " All I want to tell you is this. Follow both ; perform your duties in the world and also cultivate love of God. "

BRAHMIN : " Can anyone but a brahmin achieve perfection ? "

MASTER : " Why should you ask that ? It is said that in the Kaliyuga the sudras achieve love of God. There are the instances of Sabari, Ruhidas, the untouchable Guhaka, and others. "

NARAYAN (*smiling*) : " Brahmins and sudras—all are one. "

BRAHMIN : " Can a man realize God in one birth ? "

MASTER : " Is anything impossible for the grace of God ? Suppose you bring a light into a room that has been dark a thousand years ; does it remove the darkness little by little ? The room is lighted all at once. (*To Atul*) Intense renunciation is what is needed. One should be like an unsheathed sword. When a man has that renunciation, he looks on his relatives as black cobras and his home as a deep well. "

" One should pray to God with sincere longing. God cannot but listen to prayer if it is sincere. "

All sat in silence, pondering Sri Ramakrishna's words.

MASTER (*to Atul*) : " What is worrying you ? Is it that you haven't that grit, that intense restlessness for God ? "

ATUL : " How can we keep our minds on God ? "

MASTER : " Abhyasayoga, the yoga of practice. You should practise calling on God every day. It is not possible to succeed in one day ; through daily prayer you will come to long for God. "

" How can you feel that restlessness if you are immersed in worldliness day and night ? Formerly Jadu Mallick enjoyed spiritual talk ; he liked to

engage in it himself. But nowadays he doesn't show that much interest. He surrounds himself with flatterers day and night and indulges in worldly talk."

It was dusk. The lamp was lighted in the room. Sri Ramakrishna chanted the divine names. He was singing and praying. He said, "Chant the name of Hari, repeat the name of Hari, sing the name of Hari." Again he said, "Rama! Rama! Rama!" Then: "O Mother! Thou dost ever enjoy Thine eternal sports. Tell us, O Mother, what is the way? We have taken refuge in Thee; we have taken shelter at Thy feet."

Finding Girish restless, Sri Ramakrishna remained silent a moment. He asked Tejchandra to sit near him. The boy sat near the Master. He whispered to M. that he would have to leave soon.

MASTER (to M.): "What did he say?"

M: "He said he would have to go home."

MASTER: "Why do I attract these boys to me so much? They are pure vessels untouched by worldliness. A man cannot assimilate instruction if his mind is stained with worldliness. Milk can be safely kept in a new pot; but it turns sour if kept in a pot in which curd has been made. You may wash a thousand times a cup that has held a solution of garlic, but still you cannot remove the smell."

Sri Ramakrishna arrived at the Star Theatre, on Beadon Street, to see a performance of *Vrishaketu*.<sup>11</sup> He sat in a box, facing the south. M. and other devotees were near him.

MASTER (to M.): "Has Narendra come?"

M: "Yes, sir."

The performance began. Karna and his wife Padmavati sacrificed their son to please God, who had come to them in the guise of a brahmin to test Karna's charity. During this scene one of the devotees gave a suppressed sigh. Sri Ramakrishna also expressed his sorrow.

After the play Sri Ramakrishna went to the recreation room of the theatre. Girish and Narendra were already there. The Master stood near Narendra and said, "I have come."

Sri Ramakrishna took a seat. The orchestra was playing in the auditorium.

MASTER (to the devotees): "I feel happy listening to the concert. The musicians used to play on the sanai at Dakshineswar and I would go into ecstasy. Noticing this, a certain sadhu said, 'This is a sign of the Knowledge of Brahman.'"

The orchestra stopped playing and Sri Ramakrishna began the conversation.

MASTER (to Girish): "Does this theatre belong to you?"

GIRISH: "It is ours, sir."

MASTER: "'Ours' is good; it is not good to say 'mine'. People say 'I' and 'mine'; they are egotistic, small-minded people."

<sup>11</sup> *Vrishaketu* was the son of Karna, a hero of the *Mahabharata*, who was celebrated alike for charity and heroism. Karna sacrificed his son to fulfil a promise.



NARENDRA : "The whole world is a theatre."

MASTER : "Yes, yes, that's right. In some places you see the play of vidya and in some the play of avidya."

NARENDRA : "Everything is the play of vidya."

MASTER : "True, true. But a man realizes that when he has the Knowledge of Brahman. But for a bhakta, who follows the path of divine love, both exist—vidyamaya and avidyamaya."

"Please sing a little."

Narendra sang :

Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness waves of ecstatic love arise :  
Rapture divine ! Play of God's Bliss !  
Oh, how enthralling !  
Wondrous waves of the sweetness of God, ever new and ever  
    enchanting,  
Rise on the surface, ever assuming  
Forms ever fresh.  
Then once more in the Great Communion all are merged, as the  
    barrier walls  
Of time and space dissolve and vanish :  
Dance then, O mind !  
Dance in delight with hands upraised, chanting Lord Hari's holy  
    name.

As Narendra sang the words, "Then once more in the Great Communion all are merged", Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "One realizes this after attaining the Knowledge of Brahman ; then all is vidya, Brahman, as you said."

As Narendra sang the line, "Dance in delight with hands upraised, chanting Lord Hari's holy name", the Master said to him, "Sing that line twice."

After the song Sri Ramakrishna resumed the conversation.

GIRISH : "Devendra Babu hasn't come. He says in a mood of wounded pride : 'We haven't any stuff inside us, no filling of thickened milk. We are filled only with worthless lentil-paste. Why should we go there ?'"

MASTER (*surprised*) : "Does he say that ? He never said so before."

Sri Ramakrishna took some refreshments and handed some to Narendra.

JATIN DEVA (*to the Master*) : "You always say : 'Narendra, eat this ! Eat that !' Are the rest of us fools ! Are we like straw washed ashore by the flood-tide ?"

Sri Ramakrishna loved Jatin dearly. Jatin visited the Master now and then at Dakshineswar and occasionally spent the night there. He belonged to an aristocratic family of Sobhabazar. The Master said laughingly to Narendra, "He is talking about you."

Sri Ramakrishna laughed and showed his affection to Jatin by touching his chin. He said to Jatin, "Come to Dakshineswar ; I'll give you plenty to eat."

The Master went into the auditorium to see a farce. He sat in a box. He laughed at the conversation of the maidservant. After a while he became absent-minded and whispered a few words to M.

MASTER (*to M.*) : "Well, is what Girish Ghosh says true ?"

Girish had lately been speaking of Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God.

M : " Yes, sir, it must be true. Otherwise why should it appeal to our minds ? "

MASTER : " You see, a change is coming over me. The old mood has changed. I am not able to touch any metal now. "

M. listened to these words in wonder.

MASTER : " There is a very deep meaning in this new mood. "

Was the Master hinting that a God-man cannot bear any association with worldly treasure ?

MASTER (to M.) : " Well, do you notice any change in me ? "

M : " In what respect, sir ? "

MASTER ; " In my activities. "

M : " Your activities are increasing as more people come to know about you. "

MASTER : " Do you see ? What I said before is now coming true. "

After a few moments he said, " Can you tell me why Paltu can't meditate well ? "

Sri Ramakrishna was ready to leave for Dakshineswar. He had remarked to a devotee about Girish, " You may wash a thousand times a cup that has held a solution of garlic ; but is it ever possible to get rid of the smell altogether ? " Girish was offended by this remark. When the Master was about to leave, Girish spoke.

GIRISH : " Will this smell of garlic go ? "

MASTER : " Yes, it will. "

GIRISH : " So you say it will. "

MASTER : " All smell disappears when a blazing fire is lighted. If you heat the cup smelling of garlic, you get rid of the smell ; it becomes a new cup. "

" The man who says he will not succeed will never succeed. He who feels he is liberated is indeed liberated ; and he who feels he is bound verily remains bound. He who forcefully says, ' I am free ' is certainly free ; and he who says day and night, ' I am bound ' is certainly bound. "

## XXXVII

### THE MASTER AND NARENDRA

Sunday, March 1, 1885

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was seated on the small couch in his room, absorbed in deep samadhi. Mahimacharan, Ram, Manomohan, Nabai Chaitanya, M., and other devotees were sitting on a mat spread on the floor. They were watching the Master intently.

It was the day of the Dolayatra, a Hindu religious festival. Sri Krishna and Radha are the central figures of this celebration, their images being placed on a swing which is rocked now and then. A red powder is showered on the images. Later, friends and relatives throw the powder at one another. This festival is celebrated when winter passes into spring, on a full-moon day rendered doubly sacred by its association with the birth of Sri Chaitanya.

The devotees saw that the Master was returning to consciousness of the world, though his mind still lingered in the realm of God-vision.

The Master said to Mahimacharan, "My dear sir, please tell us something about love of God."

Mahimacharan chanted the following lines from the *Narada Pancharatra* :

What need is there of penance if God is worshipped with love ?  
What is the use of penance if God is not worshipped with love ?  
What need is there of penance if God is seen within and without ?  
What is the use of penance if God is not seen within and without ?

O Brahman ! O my child ! Cease from practising further penances.  
Hasten to Sankara, the Ocean of Heavenly Wisdom ;  
Obtain from Him the love of God, the pure love praised by devotees,  
Which snaps in twain the shackles that bind you to the world.

Mahima said, "Once while the great sage Narada was practising austerity, he suddenly heard a heavenly voice repeating those lines."

MASTER : "There are two classes of devotees : jivakotis, or ordinary men, and Isvarakotis, or Divine Messengers. The jivakoti's devotion to God is called vaidhi, formal ; that is, it conforms to scriptural laws. He worships God with a fixed number of articles, repeats God's holy name a specified number of times, and so on and so forth. This kind of devotion, like the path of knowledge, leads to the Knowledge of God and to samadhi. The jivakoti does not return from samadhi to the relative plane.

"But the case of the Isvarakoti is different. He follows the process of 'negation' and 'affirmation'. First he negates the world, realizing that it is not Brahman; but then he affirms the same world, seeing it as the manifestation of Brahman. To give an illustration: a man wanting to climb to the roof first negates the stairs as not being the roof, but on reaching the roof he finds that the stairs are made of the same materials as the roof: brick, lime, and brick-dust. Then he can either move up and down the stairs or remain on the roof, as he pleases.

"Sukadeva was absorbed in samadhi—nirvikalpa samadhi, jada samadhi. Since Suka was to recite the *Bhagavata* to King Parikshit, the Lord sent the sage Narada to him. Narada saw him seated like an inert thing, absolutely unconscious of the world around him. Thereupon Narada sang four couplets on the beauty of Hari, to the accompaniment of the vina. While the first couplet was being sung the hair on Suka's body stood on end. Next he shed tears; for he saw the form of God, the Embodiment of Spirit, within himself, in his heart. Thus Sukadeva saw the form of God even after jada samadhi. He was an Isvarakoti.

"Hanuman, after having the vision of God both with form and without, remained firmly devoted to the form of Rama, the Embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss.

"Prahlada sometimes realized, 'I am He'; sometimes he felt that he was the servant of God. How can such a person live without love of God? That is why he must accept the relationship of master and servant, feeling that God is the Master and himself the servant. This enables him to enjoy the Bliss of Hari. In this attitude he feels that God is the Bliss and he himself is the enjoyer.

"The 'ego of Devotion', the 'ego of Knowledge', and the 'ego of a child' do not harm the devotee. Sankaracharya kept the 'ego of Knowledge'. The 'ego of a child' is not attached to anything. The child is beyond the three gunas; he is not under the control of any of them. One moment you find him angry; the next moment it is all over. One moment you see him building his play house; the next moment he forgets all about it. Now you see him love his playmates; but if they are out of his sight a few days he forgets all about them. A child is not under the control of any of the gunas—sattva, rajas, or tamas.

"The bhakta feels, 'O God, Thou art the Lord and I am Thy devotee.' This 'I' is the 'ego of bhakti'. Why does such a lover of God retain the 'ego of Devotion'? There is a reason. The ego cannot be got rid of; so let the rascal remain as the servant of God, the devotee of God.

"You may reason a thousand times, but you cannot get rid of the ego. The ego is like a pitcher, and Brahman like the ocean—an infinite expanse of water on all sides. The pitcher is set in this ocean. The water is both inside and out; the water is everywhere; yet the pitcher remains. Now, this pitcher is the 'ego of the devotee'. As long as the ego remains, 'you' and 'I' remain, and there also remains the feeling, 'O God, Thou art the Lord and I am Thy devotee; Thou art the Master and I am Thy servant.' You may



reason a million times, but you cannot get rid of it. But it is different if there is no pitcher."

Narendra entered the room and saluted the Master. They began to talk together. Presently the Master came down from the couch and sat on the floor, on which a mat had been spread. In the mean time the room had become filled with people, both devotees and visitors.

MASTER (to Narendra): "Are you well? I hear that you often visit Girish Ghosh at his house. Is it true?"

NARENDRA: "Yes, sir, I go there now and then."

Girish had been visiting Sri Ramakrishna for some months. The Master said that none could fathom the depth of Girish's faith. And his longing for God was as intense as his faith was deep. At home, he was always absorbed in the thought of Sri Ramakrishna. Many of the Master's devotees visited him; they talked only about Sri Ramakrishna. But Girish was a householder who had had varied experiences of worldly life, and the Master knew that Narendra would renounce the world, that he would shun "woman and gold" both mentally and outwardly.

MASTER: "Do you visit Girish frequently? No matter how much one washes a cup that has contained a solution of garlic, still a trace of the smell will certainly linger. The youngsters who come here are pure souls—untouched by 'woman and gold'. Men who have associated a long time with 'woman and gold' smell of the garlic, as it were. They are like a mango pecked by crows. Such a fruit cannot be offered to the Deity in the temple, and you would hesitate to eat it yourself. Again, take the case of a new pot and another in which curd has been made. One is afraid to keep milk in the second pot, for the milk very often turns sour.

"Householder devotees like Girish form a class by themselves. They desire yoga and also bhoga. Their attitude is that of Ravana, who wanted to enjoy the maidens of heaven and at the same time realize Rama. They are like the asuras, the demons, who enjoy various pleasures and also realize Narayana."

NARENDRA: "But Girish has given up his old associates."

MASTER: "Yes, yes. He is like a bull castrated in old age. In Burdwan I once saw an ox moving about the cows. I asked a bullock-cart driver: 'What is this? An ox? How strange!' He said to me: 'True, sir. But it was castrated in old age, and so it hasn't altogether shaken off the old tendencies.'

"In a certain place there sat some sanniyasis. A young woman happened to pass by. All continued as before to meditate on God, except one of them, who cast sidelong glances at her. Before becoming a monk he had been the father of three children.

"If you make a solution of garlic in a cup, won't it be hard to remove the smell from it? Can a worthless tree like the babul produce mangoes? Of course such a thing may become possible through the occult powers of a yogi; but can everyone acquire such powers?

"When have worldly people time to think of God? A man wanted to engage a pundit who could explain the *Bhagavata* to him. His friend said:

'I know of an excellent pundit. But there is one difficulty : he does a great deal of farming. He has four ploughs and eight bullocks and is always busy with them ; he has no leisure.' Thereupon the man said : 'I don't care for a pundit who has no leisure. I am not looking for a *Bhagavata* scholar burdened with ploughs and bullocks. I want a pundit who can really expound the sacred book to me.'

"There was a king who used to listen daily to a pundit's exposition of the *Bhagavata*. Every day at the end of their study the pundit would ask the king, 'O King, have you understood what I have read ?' To this question the king would daily give the same reply : 'Sir, you had better understand it first yourself.' Each day, when the pundit returned home, he would ponder the meaning of the king's words. He was a pious man, devoted to prayer and meditation. Gradually he came to his senses and realized that the only real thing in the world is the Lotus Feet of God, and that all else is illusory. He felt dispassion for the world and took up the life of a monk. As he was leaving the world he sent a man to the king with the message : 'Yes, O King ! Now I have understood.'

"But do I look down on worldly people ? Of course not. When I see them, I apply the Knowledge of Brahman, the Oneness of Existence. Brahman itself has become everything ; all are Narayana Himself. Regarding all women as so many forms of the Divine Mother, I see no difference between a chaste woman and a streetwalker.

"Alas ! I find no customers who want anything better than kalai pulse. No one wants to give up 'woman and gold'. Man, deluded by the beauty of woman and the power of money, forgets God. But to one who has seen the beauty of God, even the position of Brahma, the Creator, seems insignificant.

"A man said to Ravana, 'You have been going to Sita in different disguises ; why don't you go to her in the form of Rama ?' 'But', Ravana replied, 'when I meditate on Rama in my heart, the most beautiful women--celestial maidens like Rambha and Tilottama, appear no better than ashes of the funeral pyre. Then even the position of Brahma appears trivial to me, not to speak of the beauty of another man's wife.'

"Alas ! I find that all the customers here seek worthless kalai pulse. Unless the soul is pure, it cannot have genuine love of God and single-minded devotion to the ideal. The mind wanders away to various objects.

(*To Manomohan*) "You may take offence at my words, but I said to Rakhal, 'I would rather hear that you had drowned yourself in the Ganges than learn that you had accepted a job under another person and become his servant.'

"One day a Nepalese girl came here. She sang devotional songs to the accompaniment of the esraj. When someone asked her if she was married, she said sharply : 'What ? I am the handmaid of God ! Whom else could I serve ?'

"How can a man living in the midst of 'woman and gold' realize God ? It is very hard for him to lead an unattached life. First, he is the slave of his wife, second, of money, and third, of the master whom he serves.

<sup>1</sup> A householder disciple of the Master, whose sister was married to Rakhal.

"When Akbar was Emperor of Delhi there lived a hermit in a hut in the forest. Many people visited the holy man. At one time he felt a great desire to entertain his visitors. But how could he do so without money? So he decided to go to the Emperor for help, for the gate of Akbar's palace was always open to holy men. The hermit entered the palace while the Emperor was at his daily devotions and took a seat in a corner of the room. He heard the Emperor conclude his worship with the prayer, 'O God, give me money; give me riches', and so on and so forth. When the hermit heard this he was about to leave the prayer hall; but the Emperor signed to him to wait. When the prayer was over, Akbar said to him, 'You came to see me; how is it that you were about to leave without saying anything to me?' 'Your Majesty need not trouble yourself about it', answered the hermit. 'I must leave now.' When the Emperor insisted, the hermit said, 'Many people visit my hut, and so I came here to ask you for some money.' 'Then', said Akbar, 'why were you going away without speaking to me?' The hermit replied: 'I found that you too were a beggar; you too prayed to God for money and riches. Thereupon I said to myself: "Why should I beg of a beggar? If I must beg, let me beg of God."'"

NARENDRA: "Nowadays Girish Ghosh thinks of nothing but spiritual things."

MASTER: "That is very good. But why is he so abusive? Why does he use such vulgar language to me? In my present state of mind I cannot bear such rudeness. When a thunderbolt strikes near a house, the heavy things inside the house are not much affected, but the window-panes rattle. Nowadays I cannot bear such roughness. A man living on the plane of sattva cannot bear noise and uproar. That is why Hriday was sent away. It was the Divine Mother who sent him away. During the later part of his stay he went to extremes; he became very rough and abusive. (To Narendra) Do you agree with Girish about me?"

NARENDRA: "He said he believed you to be an Incarnation of God. I didn't say anything in answer to his remarks."

MASTER: "But how great his faith is! Don't you think so?"

The devotees listened intently to the Master's words. He was still seated on the mat spread on the floor, with M. by his side and Narendra in front of him. The devotees were sitting around.

After a few minutes' silence he said to Narendra tenderly, "My child, you will not attain God without renouncing 'woman and gold.'" As he said this, great emotion welled up in his heart. Fixing on Narendra an earnest and tender look, he sang:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This was a very critical period in Narendranath's life. After his father's death he had been faced with extreme poverty; friends and relatives had proved indifferent or treacherous. His rational mind could not reconcile the existence of human misery with the mercy of God. A few days before this meeting with the Master, on his way home, almost exhausted after a futile search for a job, he had sat down on the open porch of a house by the street, waiting for a shower of rain to pass. There he had received a revelation in which he had found the solution of all his conflicting problems. He had felt refreshed, realizing the unreality of the world, and had determined to become a monk at once. So he had come to the Master to take leave of him, but had not told him of his intention. Yet nothing could be hidden from Sri Ramakrishna; hence the song.

We are afraid to speak, and yet we are afraid to keep still ;  
 Our minds, O Radha, half believe that we are about to lose you !  
 We tell you the secret that we know—  
 The secret whereby we ourselves, and others, with our help,  
 Have passed through many a time of peril ;  
 Now it all depends on you.

Sri Ramakrishna seemed to be afraid lest Narendra should leave him. Narendra looked at the Master with tears in his eyes.

A visitor who was there for the first time heard and saw all this. He said to the Master, " Sir, if one must renounce ' woman and gold ', then what shall a householder do ? "

MASTER : " You may enjoy ' woman and gold '. What has passed between us is no concern of yours."

Mahimacharan, householder devotee, heard everything and sat speechless.

MASTER (*to Mahima*) : " Go forward. Push on. You will discover the forest of sandal-wood. Go farther and you will find the silver-mine. Go farther still and you will see the gold-mine. Do not stop there. Go forward, and you will reach the mines of rubies and diamonds. Therefore I say, go forward."

MAHIMA : " But, sir, something holds us back. We can't move."

MASTER (*with a smile*) : " Why ? Cut the reins. Cut them with the sword of God's name. ' The shackles of Kala, Time, are cut by Kali's name.' "

Every now and then the Master cast his gracious look on Narendra. He said, " Have you now become an experienced physician ? " Quoting a Sanskrit verse he said, " He who has killed only a hundred patients is a novice in medicine ; but he becomes an expert after killing a thousand ! "

Was the Master hinting that Narendra, even though still young, had had many painful experiences of life ?

Narendra smiled and kept silent.

It was afternoon. The devotees were seated around the Master, listening to Nabai Chaitanya's singing. Suddenly the Master left the room, but the music continued. M. accompanied the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna walked across the courtyard and entered the temple of Radhakanta. He bowed down before the images, M. following him. There was some red powder in a tray. The Master offered a little powder to the images and bowed down again.

Next he proceeded to the Kali temple. Passing up the seven steps, he stood on the open porch and looked at the image. Then he entered the shrine, offered red powder to the Divine Mother, and saluted Her. As he left the temple he asked M., " Why didn't you bring Baburam with you ? "

Sri Ramakrishna returned to his room accompanied by M. and another devotee carrying the tray of red powder. He offered a little of it to all the pictures of gods and goddesses in his room, but not to those of Jesus Christ and himself. Then he threw the powder on the bodies of Narendra and the other devotees. They all took the dust of his feet.



In the cool shade of the late afternoon the devotees walked about in the temple garden, leaving the Master and M. in the room. The Master whispered to M. : " All say that they meditate well. But why is it different with Paltu ? What do you think of Narendra ? He is utterly guileless. Just now he is faced with many difficult family problems and so his spiritual progress is a little checked ; but it will not be so for long."

Narendra was arguing on the verandah with a Vedantist. Now and then the Master went out to look at them. As the devotees gathered in the room he asked Mahima to recite a hymn. Mahima chanted a verse from the *Mahā-nirvana Tantra* :

We worship the Brahman-Consciousness in the Lotus of the Heart,  
The Undifferentiated, who is adored by Hari, Hara, and Brahma. . . .

Mahima recited a few more hymns and at last one to Siva, by Sankaracharya, that compared the world to a deep well and a wilderness. Mahima was a householder.

The hymn ran thus :

O Great God ! O Thou Auspicious One, with the moon shining in  
Thy crest !

Slayer of Madana !<sup>1</sup> Wielder of the trident ! Unmoving One ! Lord  
of the Himalayas !

O Consort of Durga, Lord of all creatures ! Thou who scatterest the  
distress of the fearful !

Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miser-  
able world.

O Beloved of Parvati's heart ! O Thou moon-crested Deity !

Master of every being ! Lord of hosts ! O Thou, the Lord of Parvati !

O Vamadeva, Self-existent One ! O Rudra, Wielder of the bow !

Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miser-  
able world.

O blue-throated God ! Siva, whose ensign is the bull ! O Five-faced  
One !

Lord of the worlds, who wearest snakes upon Thy wrists ! O Thou  
Auspicious One !

O Siva ! O Pasupati !<sup>4</sup> O Thou, the Lord of Parvati !

Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miser-  
able world.

O Lord of the universe ! O Siva Sankara ! O God of Gods !

Thou who dost bear the river Ganges in Thy matted locks !

Thou, the Master of Pramatha and Nandika !<sup>5</sup> O Hara, Lord of the  
world !

Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miser-  
able world.

O King of Kasi, Lord of the cremation ground of Manikarnika !

O mighty Hero, Thou the Destroyer of Daksha's<sup>6</sup> sacrifice ! O All-  
pervasive One !

<sup>1</sup> The god of love.

<sup>4</sup> Lord of beings.

<sup>5</sup> Attendants of Siva.

<sup>6</sup> Siva's father-in-law.



O Lord of hosts ! Omniscient One, who art the sole Indweller in every heart ! O Lord !  
Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miserable world.

O Great God ! Compassionate One ! O Benign Deity !  
O Vyomakesa !<sup>7</sup> Blue-throated One ! O Lord of hosts !  
Thy body is smeared with ashes ! Thou art garlanded with human skulls !  
Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miserable world.

O Thou who dwellest on Mount Kailas ! Thou whose carrier is the bull !  
O Conqueror of death ! O Three-eyed One ! Lord of the three worlds !  
Beloved of Narayana ! Conqueror of lust ! Thou, Sakti's Lord !  
Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miserable world.

Lord of the Universe ! Refuge of the whole world ! O Thou of infinite forms !  
Soul of the Universe ! O Thou in whom repose the infinite virtues of the world !  
O Thou adored by all ! Compassionate One ! O Friend of the poor !  
Rescue me, helpless as I am, from the trackless forest of this miserable world.

MASTER (to Mahima) : " Why do you call the world a deep well or a trackless forest ? An aspirant may think so in the beginning ; but how can he be frightened by the world if he holds fast to God ? Then he finds that—

This very world is a mansion of mirth ;  
Here I can eat, here drink and make merry.

" Why should you be frightened ? Hold fast to God. What if the world is like a forest of thorns ? Put on shoes and walk on the thorns. Whom should you fear ? You won't have to play again the part of the ' thief ' in the game of hide-and-seek, once you touch the ' granny '."

" King Janaka used to fence with two swords—the one of Knowledge and the other of action. Nothing can frighten an expert player.

(To M.) " My mind is still drawn to what he just recited."

Sri Ramakrishna referred to the hymns chanted by Mahima.

Nabai Chaitanya and the other devotees began to sing. They were joined by the Master, who danced, drunk with divine love. Afterwards he said : " This is the one thing needful, the chanting of God's name. All else is unreal. Love and devotion alone are real, and other things are of no consequence."

Later Sri Ramakrishna went out in the direction of the Panchavati. He asked M. about Binode, a student in M.'s school, who now and then experienced ecstasy while thinking of God. The Master loved him dearly.

<sup>7</sup> A name of Siva.

<sup>8</sup> See foot-note 6, p. 60.

As he was returning to his room with M., he asked : " Well, some speak of me as an Incarnation of God. What do you think about it ? " The Master came back to his room and sat on the small couch. He repeated the question to M. The other devotees were seated at a distance and could not follow the conversation.

MASTER : " What do you say ? "

M : " I think so too. You are like Sri Chaitanya. "

MASTER : " Is it a full manifestation of God, or a part ? Tell me how much. "

M : " I don't know, sir. But it is true that there is in you an Incarnation of the Divine Power. There is no doubt that God alone dwells in you. "

MASTER : " That is true. Chaitanya also wanted to realize Sakti, the Divine Power. "

Narendra was engaged in a heated discussion. Ram, who had recently recovered from an illness, joined him.

MASTER (to M.) : " I don't like such discussions. (To Ram) Will you stop that ? You haven't been well. All right, go on softly ; don't get so excited. (To M.) I don't like these discussions. I used to weep and pray to the Divine Mother, saying : ' O Mother, one man says it is this, while another says it is that. Do Thou tell me, O Mother, what is the truth. ' "

*Saturday, March 7, 1885*

At three o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was in his room at Dakshineswar conversing happily with his devotees. Baburam, the younger Naren, Paltu, Haripada, Mohinimohan, and others were present. A young brahmin who had been staying with the Master a few days was also there.

The Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna's wife, was living in the nahabat. Occasionally she would come to Sri Ramakrishna's room to attend to his needs. Mohinimohan had brought his wife and Nabin's mother with him to the temple garden from Calcutta. The ladies were with the Holy Mother ; they were waiting for an opportunity to visit the Master when the men devotees would leave the room.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch. As he looked at the young devotees his face beamed with joy.

Rakhal was not then living at Dakshineswar with the Master. Since his return from Vrindavan he had been living at home.

MASTER (smiling) : " Rakhal is now enjoying his ' pension '. Since his return from Vrindavan he has been staying at home. His wife is there. But he said to me that he would not accept any work even if he were offered a salary of a thousand rupees.

" Rakhal would lie down here and say to me that he didn't care even for my company. He was then passing through such an exalted state.

" Bhavanath is married ; but he spends the whole night in spiritual conversation with his wife. The couple pass their time talking of God alone. I said to him, ' Have a little fun with your wife now and then. ' ' What ? ' he retorted angrily. ' Shall we too indulge in frivolity ? ' "

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk about Narendra.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "I haven't felt the same strong longing for the younger Naren that I felt for Narendra.

(*To Haripada*) "Do you go to Girish Ghosh's house?"

HARIPADA: "Yes, I go there very often. He is our neighbour."

MASTER: "Does Narendra, too, go there?"

HARIPADA: "Yes, I see him there occasionally."

MASTER: "What does he say in reply to Girish?" [*Girish Ghosh spoke of Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God.*]

HARIPADA: "Narendra has been defeated in the argument."

MASTER: "No, Narendra says, 'Girish Ghosh has such strong faith; why should I contradict him?'"

The brother of Judge Anukul Mukhopadhyaya's son-in-law was in the room. The Master asked him, "Do you know Narendra?"

BROTHER: "Yes, sir. He is a very intelligent young man."

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "He must be a good man because he speaks highly of Narendra. Narendra was here the other day and sang with Trailokya Sannyal. But that day his singing seemed flat to me."

Baburam was a student in the Entrance Class in the school where M. taught.

MASTER (*to Baburam*): "Where are your books? Aren't you attending to your studies? (*To M.*) He wants to stick to both."

"That is very difficult. What will you gain by knowing God partially? Vasisthadeva, great sage that he was, was overcome at the death of his sons. That amazed Lakshmana and he asked Rama the reason. Rama said: 'Brother, what is there to wonder at? He who has knowledge has ignorance also. Brother, go beyond both knowledge and ignorance.' If a thorn enters the sole of your foot, you get another thorn to take out the first one. Afterwards you throw both away. Likewise, one procures the thorn of knowledge to remove the thorn of ignorance; then one goes beyond both knowledge and ignorance."

BABURAM (*smiling*): "That's what I want."

MASTER (*smiling*): "But, my child, can you attain it by holding to both? If you want that, then come away."

BABURAM (*smiling*): "Take me away from the world."

MASTER (*to M.*): "Rakhal lived with me, but that was different; his father agreed to it. If these boys stay here there will be trouble.

(*To Baburam*) "You have no strength of mind; you haven't much courage. Just see how the younger Naren says, 'I will come away for good.'"

Sri Ramakrishna came down from the small couch and sat among the youngsters on the floor. M. sat by his side.

MASTER (*to M.*): "I have been seeking one who has totally renounced 'woman and gold'. When I find a young man, I think that perhaps he will live with me; but everyone raises some objection or other.



"A ghost sought a companion. It is said that a man who dies on a Saturday or Tuesday becomes a ghost. Therefore, whenever the ghost saw anybody fall from a roof or stumble and faint on the road on either of those days, he would run to him, hoping that the man, through an accidental death, would become a ghost and be his companion. But such was his ill luck that everyone revived. The poor thing could not get a companion.

"Just see, Rakhal always gives his wife as an excuse. He says, 'What will become of her?' When I touched Narendra on the chest, he became unconscious; then he cried out: 'Oh, what have you done to me? Don't you know that I have a father and mother?'

"Why has God made me lead this kind of life?"<sup>10</sup> Chaitanyadeva became a sannyasi so that all would salute him. Whoever salutes an Incarnation, even once, obtains liberation."

Mohinimohan had brought a basket of sweetmeats for Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER: "Who has brought these sweets?"

Baburam pointed to Mohinimohan.

Sri Ramakrishna touched the sweets, uttering the word "Om", and ate a little. Then he distributed them among the devotees. To the surprise of the others, he fed the younger Naren and a few of the boys with his own hand.

MASTER (to M.): "This has a meaning. There is a greater manifestation of God in men of pure heart. In former years, when I used to go to Kamarpukur, I would feed some of the young boys with my own hand. Chhine Sankhari would say, 'Why doesn't he feed us that way?' But how could I? They led an immoral life. Who would feed them?"

Sri Ramakrishna was in the happiest mood with his young and pure-souled devotees. He was seated on the small couch and was doing funny imitations of a kirtani. The devotees laughed heartily. The kirtani is dressed lavishly and covered with ornaments. She sings, standing on the floor, a coloured kerchief in her hand. Now and then she coughs to draw people's attention and blows her nose, raising her nose-ring. When a respectable gentleman enters the room, she welcomes him with appropriate words, still continuing her song. Now and then she pulls her sari from her arms to show off her jewels.

The devotees were convulsed with laughter at this mimicry by Sri Ramakrishna. Paltu rolled on the ground. Pointing to him, the Master said to M.: "Look at that child! He is rolling with laughter." He said to Paltu with a smile: "Don't report this to your father, or he will lose the little respect he has for me. You see, he is an 'Englishman'."

MASTER (to the devotees): "There are people who indulge in all kinds of gossip at the time of their daily devotions. As you know, one is not permitted to talk then; so they make all kinds of signs, keeping their lips closed. In order to say, 'Bring this', 'Bring that', they make sounds like 'Huh', 'Uuh'. All such things they do! (Laughter.)

"Again, there are some who bargain for fish while telling their beads. As they count the rosary, with a finger they point out the fish, indicating,

<sup>10</sup> Evidently Sri Ramakrishna was referring to his monastic life.

'That one, please.' They reserve all their business for that time !  
(*Laughter.*)

"There are women who come to the Ganges for their bath and, instead of thinking of God, gossip about no end of things. 'What jewels did you offer at the time of your son's marriage?'—'Has so-and-so returned from her father-in-law's house?'—'So-and-so is seriously ill.'—'So-and-so went to see the bride; we hope that they will offer a magnificent dowry and that there will be a great feast.'—'Harish always nags at me; he can't stay away from me even an hour.'—'My child, I couldn't come to see you all these days; I was so busy with the betrothal of so-and-so's daughter.'

"You see, they have come to bathe in the holy river, and yet they indulge in all sorts of worldly talk."

The Master began to look intently at the younger Naren and went into samadhi. Did he see God Himself in the pure-souled devotee?

The devotees silently watched the figure of Sri Ramakrishna motionless in samadhi. A few minutes before there had been so much laughter in the room; now there was deep silence, as if no one were there. The Master sat with folded hands as in his photograph.

After a short while his mind began to come down to the relative plane. He heaved a long sigh and became aware of the outer world. He looked at the devotees and began to talk with them of their spiritual progress.

MASTER (*to the younger Naren*): "I have been eager to see you. You will succeed. Come here once in a while. Well, which do you prefer—jnana or bhakti?"

THE YOUNGER NAREN: "Pure bhakti."

MASTER: "But how can you *love* someone unless you *know* him? (*Pointing to M., with a smile*) How can you love him unless you know him? (*To M.*) Since a pure-souled person has asked for pure bhakti, it must have some meaning.

"One does not seek bhakti of one's own accord without inborn tendencies. This is the characteristic of prema-bhakti. There is another kind of bhakti, called jnana-bhakti, which is love of God based on reasoning.

(*To the younger Naren*) "Let me look at your body; take off your shirt. Fairly broad chest. You will succeed. Come here now and then."

Sri Ramakrishna was still in the ecstatic mood. He spoke tenderly to the other devotees about their future.

MASTER (*to Paltu*): "You will succeed, too, but it will take a little time.

(*To Baburam*) "Why don't I attract you to me? It is just to avoid trouble.

(*To Mohinimohan*) "As for you, you are all right. There is a little yet to be done. When that is achieved, nothing will remain—neither duty nor work nor the world itself. Is it good to get rid of everything?"

As Sri Ramakrishna spoke these words he looked at Mohini affectionately, as if scanning his inmost feelings. Was Mohini really wondering whether it would be wise to renounce all for God? After a while Sri Ramakrishna said: "God binds the *Bhagavata* pundit to the world with one tie; otherwise,

who would remain to explain the sacred book ? He keeps the pundit bound for the good of men. That is why the Divine Mother has kept you in the world."

Now Sri Ramakrishna spoke to the young brahmin.

MASTER : " Give up knowledge and reasoning ; accept bhakti. Bhakti alone is the essence. Is this the third day of your stay here ? "

BRAHMIN (*with folded hands*) : " Yes, sir. "

MASTER : " Have faith. Depend on God. Then you will not have to do anything yourself. Mother Kali will do everything for you. "

" Jnana goes as far as the outer court, but bhakti can enter the inner court. The Pure Self is unattached. Both vidya and avidya are in It, but It is unattached. Sometimes there is a good and sometimes a bad smell in the air, but the air itself is unaffected. "

" Once Vyasadeva was about to cross the Jamuna. The gopis also were there. They wanted to go to the other side of the river to sell curd, milk, and cream. But there was no ferry at that time. They were all worried about how to cross the river, when Vyasa said to them, ' I am very hungry. ' The milk-maids fed him with milk and cream. He finished almost all their food. Then Vyasa said to the river, ' O Jamuna, if I have not eaten anything, then your waters will part and we shall walk through. ' It so happened. The river parted and a pathway was formed between the waters. Following that path, the gopis and Vyasa crossed the river. Vyasa had said, ' If I have not eaten anything '. That means, the real man is Pure Atman. Atman is unattached and beyond Prakriti. It has neither hunger nor thirst ; It knows neither birth nor death ; It does not age, nor does It die. It is immutable as Mount Sumeru. "

" He who has attained this Knowledge of Brahman is a jivanmukta, liberated while living in the body. He rightly understands that the Atman and the body are two separate things. After realizing God one does not identify the Atman with the body. These two are separate, like the kernel and the shell of the coconut when its milk dries up. The Atman moves, as it were, within the body. When the ' milk ' of worldly-mindedness has dried up, one gets Self-Knowledge. Then one feels that Atman and body are two separate things. The kernel of a green almond or betel-nut cannot be separated from the shell ; but when they are ripe the juice dries up and the kernel separates from the shell. After the attainment of the Knowledge of Brahman, the ' milk ' of worldly-mindedness dries up. "

" But it is extremely difficult to attain the Knowledge of Brahman. One doesn't get it by merely talking about it. Some people feign it. (*Smiling*) There was a man who was a great liar ; but, on the other hand, he used to say he had the Knowledge of Brahman. When someone took him to task for telling lies, he said : ' Why, this world is truly like a dream. If everything is unreal, then can truth itself be real ? Truth is as unreal as falsehood. ' "

(*All laugh.*)

Sri Ramakrishna sat with the devotees on the mat on the floor. He was smiling. He said to the devotees, " Please stroke my feet gently. " They carried out his request. He said to M., " There is great significance in this. " "

" The stroking of his feet. "

his hand on his heart, the Master said, "If there is anything here, then through this service the ignorance and illusion of the devotees will be completely destroyed."

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna became serious, as if about to reveal a secret.

MASTER (to M.): "There is no outsider here. The other day, when Harish was with me, I saw Satchidananda come out of this sheath." It said, 'I incarnate Myself in every age.' I thought that I myself was saying these words out of mere fancy. I kept quiet and watched. Again Satchidananda itself spoke, saying, 'Chaitanya, too, worshipped Sakti.'"

The devotees listened to these words in amazement. Some wondered whether God Himself was seated before them in the form of Sri Ramakrishna. The Master paused a moment. Then he said, addressing M., "I saw that it is the fullest manifestation of Satchidananda; but this time the Divine Power is manifested through the glory of sattva."

The devotees sat spellbound.

MASTER (to M.): "Just now I was saying to the Mother, 'I cannot talk much.' I also said to Her, 'May people's inner consciousness be awakened by only one touch!' You see, such is the power of Yogamaya that She can cast a spell. She did so at Vrindavan. That is why Subol<sup>12</sup> was able to unite Sri Krishna and Radhika. Yogamaya, the Primal Power, has a power of attraction. I applied that power myself.

(To M.) "Well, do you think that those who come here are realizing anything?"

M: "Yes, sir, it must be so."

MASTER: "How do you know?"

M. (smiling): "Everyone says, 'Whoever goes to him doesn't return to the world.'"

MASTER (smiling): "A bullfrog was caught by a water-snake. The snake could neither swallow the frog nor let it go. As a result the frog suffered very much; he croaked continuously. And the snake suffered too. But if the frog had been seized by a cobra, he would have been quiet after one or two croaks. (All laugh.)

(To the young devotees) "Read the *Bhaktichaitanyachandrika* by Trailokya. Ask Trailokya for a copy. He has written well about Chaitanyadeva."

A DEVOTEE: "Will he give it to us?"

MASTER (smiling): "Why not? If a farmer has a good crop of melons he can easily give away two or three. (All laugh.) Won't Trailokya give you the book free?"

(To Paltu) "Come here now and then."

PALTU: "I shall come whenever I can."

MASTER: "Will you see me in Calcutta when I go there?"

PALTU: "Yes, I shall try."

MASTER: "That's the answer of a calculating mind."

PALTU: "If I don't say, 'I shall try', I may be a liar."

<sup>12</sup> Sri Ramakrishna's body.

<sup>13</sup> One of the companions of Sri Krishna.



MASTER (to M.): "I don't mind the lies of these boys. They are not free."

(To Haripada) "Why hasn't Mahendra Mukherji come here lately?"

HARIPADA: "I'm not quite sure why."

M. (smiling): "He's practising jnanayoga!"

MASTER: "No, it's not that. The other day he promised to send me in his carriage to the theatre to see a play about the life of Prahlada; but he didn't send the carriage. Perhaps that is why he doesn't come."

M: "One day I saw Mahima Chakravarty and had a talk with him. It seems that Mahendra visits him."

MASTER: "But Mahima talks about bhakti also. He loves to recite the hymn: 'What need is there of penance if God is worshipped with love?'"

M. (smiling): "He says that because you make him say it."

Girish Chandra Ghosh was always talking to the devotees about the Master.

HARIPADA: "Girish Ghosh sees many visions nowadays. After going home from here he remains absorbed in spiritual moods and sees many things."

MASTER: "That may be true. Coming to the Ganges, one sees many things—boats, ships, and what not."

HARIPADA: "Girish Ghosh says: 'From now on I shall occupy myself only with my work. In the morning, on the stroke of the clock, I shall sit down with my pen and ink-pot and write for the whole day.' He makes the resolve, no doubt, but cannot carry it out. No sooner do we visit him than he begins to talk about you. You asked him to send Narendra here in a carriage. He said, 'I shall hire a carriage for Narendra.'"

At five o'clock the younger Naren was ready to go home. Sri Ramakrishna stood by his side on the northeast verandah and gave him various instructions. Then the boy saluted the Master and departed. Many of the devotees also took their leave.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch talking to Mohini. Mohini's wife was almost mad with grief on account of her son's death. Sometimes she laughed and sometimes she wept. But she felt peaceful in Sri Ramakrishna's presence.

MASTER: "How is your wife now?"

MOHINI: "She becomes quiet whenever she is here; but sometimes at home she becomes very wild. The other day she was going to kill herself."

When Sri Ramakrishna heard this he appeared worried. Mohini said to him humbly, "Please give her a few words of advice."

MASTER: "Don't allow her to cook. That will heat her brain all the more. And keep her in the company of others so that they may watch her."

It was dusk. Preparations were going on in the temples for the evening worship. The lamp was lighted in the Master's room and incense was burnt. Seated on the small couch, Sri Ramakrishna saluted the Divine Mother and chanted Her name in a tender voice. There was nobody in the room except M., who was sitting on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna rose from the couch. M. also stood up. The Master asked him to shut the west and north doors of the room. M. obeyed and stood by Sri Ramakrishna on the porch. The Master said that he wanted to go to the Kali temple. Leaning on M.'s arm, he came down to the terrace of the temple. He asked M. to call Baburam and sat down.

After visiting the Divine Mother, the Master returned to his room across the court, chanting, "O Mother ! Mother ! Rajarajesvari !"

Sri Ramakrishna entered his room and sat on the small couch. He had been passing through an extraordinary state of mind : he could not touch any metal. He had said a few days before, "It seems that the Divine Mother had been removing from my mind all ideas of possession." He had been eating from plantain-leaves and drinking water from an earthen tumbler. He could not touch a metal jar ; so he had asked the devotees to get a few earthen jars for him. If he touched metal plates or pots, his hand ached as if stung by a horned fish.

Prasanna had brought a few earthen pots, but they were very small. The Master said with a smile : "These pots are too small. But he is a nice boy. Once I asked him to take off his clothes, and he stood naked in front of me. What a child he is !"

Tarak of Belgharia arrived with a friend and bowed low before Sri Ramakrishna, who was sitting on the small couch. The room was lighted by an oil lamp. A few devotees were sitting on the floor.

Tarak was about twenty years old, and married. His parents did not allow him to come to Sri Ramakrishna. He lived mostly at his home near Bowbazar. The Master was very fond of him. Tarak's friend had a tamasic nature ; he rather scoffed at the Master and religious ideas in general.

MASTER (to Tarak's friend) : "Why don't you go and visit the temples ?"

FRIEND : "Oh, I've seen them before."

MASTER : "Is it wrong for Tarak to come here ?"

FRIEND : "You know best."

MASTER (pointing to M.) : "He is a headmaster."

FRIEND : "Oh !"

Sri Ramakrishna asked about Tarak's health and talked with him at length. Tarak was ready to leave. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to be careful about many things.

MASTER : "My good man, beware. Beware of 'woman and gold'. Once you sink in the maya of woman, you will not be able to rise. It is the whirlpool of the Visalakshi." He who has fallen into it cannot pull himself out again. Come here now and then."

TARAK : "My people at home don't let me."

A DEVOTEE : "Suppose someone's mother says to him, 'Don't go to Dakshineswar.' Suppose she curses him, saying, 'If you go there you will be drinking my blood !'"

MASTER : "A mother who says that is no mother ; she is the embodiment of avidya. There is no sin in disobeying such a mother. She obstructs her son's path to God. There is no harm in disobeying your elders for the sake of

"A stream near Kamarpukur.

of God. For Rama's sake Bharata did not obey his mother Kaikeyi.<sup>15</sup> The gopis did not obey their husbands when they were forbidden to visit Krishna. Prahlada disobeyed his father for God. Bali disregarded the words of Sukracharya, his teacher, in order to please God. Bibhishana went against the wishes of Ravana, his elder brother, to please Rama. But you must obey your elders in all other things. Let me see your hand."

Sri Ramakrishna took Tarak's hand into his own and seemed to feel its weight. A few moments later he said : "There is a little crookedness in your mind ; but that will go. Pray to God a little and come here now and then. Yes, that twist will go. Is it you that have hired the house at Bowbazar ?"

TARAK : "Not I, sir, but my parents."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "They or you ? Is it because you are afraid of the 'tiger' ?"

Tarak had a young wife. Did the Master mean that a woman is like a tiger to a man ?

Tarak saluted Sri Ramakrishna and took his leave. The Master lay down on the small couch. He seemed worried about Tarak. Suddenly he said to M., "Why do I worry so much about these young boys ?" M. kept still. He was thinking over a reply. The Master asked him, "Why don't you speak ?"

Mohini's wife entered the room and sat at one side. Sri Ramakrishna spoke to M. about Tarak's friend.

MASTER : "Why did Tarak bring that fellow with him ?"

M : "Perhaps he wanted a companion for the road. It is a long way from Calcutta ; so he brought a friend with him."

The Master suddenly addressed Mohini's wife and said : "By unnatural death one becomes an evil spirit. Beware. Make it clear to your mind. Is this what you have come to after hearing and seeing so much ?"

Mohini was about to take his leave. He saluted Sri Ramakrishna. His wife also saluted the Master, who stood near the north door of the room. Mohini's wife spoke to him in a whisper.

MASTER : "Do you want to stay here ?"

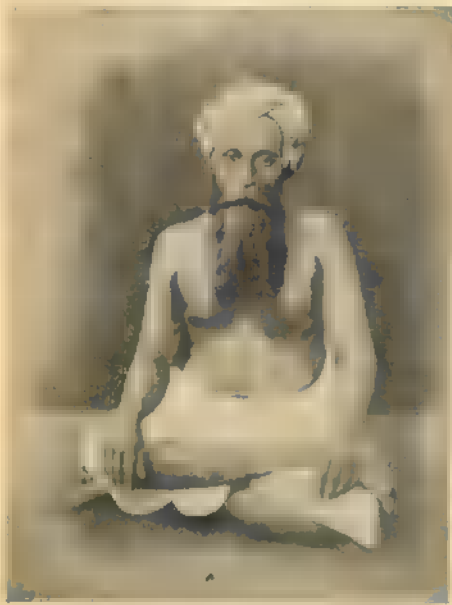
MOHINI'S WIFE : "Yes, I want to spend a few days with the Holy Mother at the nahabat. May I ?"

MASTER : "That will be all right. But you talk of dying. That frightens me. And the Ganges is so near !"

<sup>15</sup> Through Kaikeyi's machinations, her stepson, Rama, was exiled to the forest so that Bharata might become king ; but Bharata refused to ascend the throne.



RAMACHANDRA DATTA



BALARAM BOSE



KESHAB CHANDRA SEN



GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH



SURENDRA MITRA



## XXXVIII

### WITH THE DEVOTEES IN CALCUTTA

March 11, 1885

ON THE MORNING of Wednesday, March 11, Sri Ramakrishna and some of his disciples visited Balaram Bose's house. Balaram was indeed blessed among the householder disciples of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna often described him as a *rasaddar*, or supplier of stores, appointed by the Divine Mother to take care of his physical needs. Balaram's house in Calcutta had been sanctified many times by the Master's presence. There he frequently lost himself in *samadhi*, dancing, singing, or talking about God. Those of the Master's disciples and devotees who could not go to Dakshineswar visited him there and received his instruction. He often asked Balaram to invite young disciples such as Rakhal, Bhavanath, and Narendra to his house, saying : "These pure souls are the veritable manifestations of God. To feed them is to feed God Himself. They are born with special divine attributes. By serving them you will be serving God." And so it happened that whenever the Master was at Balaram's house the devotees would gather there. It was the Master's chief vineyard in Calcutta. It was here that the devotees came to know each other intimately.

M. taught in a school in the neighbourhood. He often brought his young students to visit the Master at Balaram's house. On this day, having learnt of Sri Ramakrishna's arrival, M. went there at noon during the recess hour of the school. He found the Master resting in the drawing-room after his midday meal. Several young boys were in the room. M. prostrated himself before the Master and sat by his side.

MASTER (*tenderly*) : "How could you come now ? Have you no school work ?"

M : "I have come directly from school. Just now I have no important work to do."

A DEVOTEE : "No, sir ; he is playing truant today." (*All laugh.*)

M. said to himself, "Alas ! It is indeed as if some invisible power had drawn me here."

The Master, looking a little thoughtful, asked M. to come nearer. He said, "Please wring out my wet towel and put my coat in the sun." Then he continued : "My legs and feet ache. Please rub them gently."

M. felt very happy to be given the privilege of rendering these services to the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna said to M. : " Can you tell me why I have been feeling like this the past few days ? It is impossible for me to touch any metal. When I touched a metal cup I felt as if I had been stung by a horned fish. There was an excruciating pain all over my arm. But I must use a brass water-jar, and so I tried to carry it after covering it with my towel. But the moment I touched the jar I felt the same acute pain in my arm. It was an unbearable pain ! At last I prayed to the Divine Mother : ' O Mother, I shall never do it again. Please forgive me this time.' "

" The younger Naren often visits me. Do you think his people at home will object ? He is very pure and doesn't know what carnal pleasure is. "

M : " He is a ' large receptacle ' . "

MASTER : " That is true. Further, he says he remembers spiritual things after hearing them once only. He told me, ' I used to weep in my boyhood because I couldn't see God. ' "

The Master and M. were thus talking about the young devotee when someone reminded M. of his school.

MASTER : " What is the time now ? "

A DEVOTEE : " It is ten minutes to one. "

MASTER (to M.) : " You had better go now. It is getting late for you. You have left your duties. (To Latu) Where is Rakhal ? "

LATU : " He has gone home. "

MASTER : " What ? Has he gone away without seeing me ? "

After school-hours M. returned to Balaram's house and found the Master sitting in the drawing-room, surrounded by his devotees and disciples. Among them were Girish, Suresh, Balaram, Latu, and Chunilal. The Master's face was beaming with a sweet smile, which was reflected in the happy faces of those in the room. M. was asked to take a seat by the Master's side.

MASTER (to Girish) : " You had better argue this point with Narendra and see what he has to say. "

GIRISH : " Narendra says that God is infinite ; we cannot even so much as say that the things or persons we perceive are parts of God. How can Infinity have parts ? It cannot. "

MASTER : " However great and infinite God may be, His Essence can and does manifest itself through man by His mere will. God's Incarnation as a man cannot be explained by analogy. One must feel it for oneself and realize it by direct perception. An analogy can give us only a little glimpse. By touching the horns, legs, or tail of a cow, we in fact touch the cow herself ; but for us the essential thing about a cow is her milk, which comes through the udder. The Divine Incarnation is like the udder. God incarnates Himself as man from time to time in order to teach people devotion and divine love. "

GIRISH : " Narendra says : ' Is it ever possible to know all of God ? He is infinite. ' "

MASTER (to Girish) : " Who can comprehend everything about God ? It is not given to man to know any aspect of God, great or small. And what need is there to know everything about God ? It is enough if we only realize Him. And we see God Himself if we but see His Incarnation. Suppose a person goes to the Ganges and touches its water. He will then say, ' Yes, I have seen and touched the Ganges.' To say this it is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of the river from Hardwar to Gangasagar. (*Laughter.*)

" If I touch your feet, surely that is the same as touching you. (*Laughter.*) If a person goes to the ocean and touches but a little of its water, he has surely touched the ocean itself. Fire, as an element, exists in all things, but in wood it is present to a greater degree."

GIRISH (*smiling*) : " I am looking for fire. Naturally I want to go to a place where I can get it."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Yes, fire, as an element, is present more in wood than in any other object. If you seek God, then seek Him in man ; He manifests Himself more in man than in any other thing. If you see a man endowed with ecstatic love, overflowing with prema, mad after God, intoxicated with His love, then know for certain that God has incarnated Himself through that man.

(*To M.*) " There is no doubt that God exists in all things ; but the manifestations of His Power are different in different beings. The greatest manifestation of His Power is through an Incarnation. Again, in some Incarnations there is a complete manifestation of God's Power. It is the Sakti, the Power of God, that is born as an Incarnation."

GIRISH : " Narendra says that God is beyond our words and thought."

MASTER : " That is not altogether true. He is, no doubt, unknowable by this ordinary mind, but He can indeed be known by the pure mind. The mind and intellect become pure the moment they are free from attachment to ' woman and gold '. The pure mind and pure intellect are one and the same. God is known by the pure mind. Didn't the sages and seers of olden times see God ? They realized the All-pervading Consciousness by means of their inner consciousness."

GIRISH (*with a smile*) : " I defeated Narendra in the argument."

MASTER : " Oh, no ! He said to me : ' When Girish Ghosh has so much faith in God's Incarnation as man, what can I say to him ? It is not proper to meddle with such faith.' "

GIRISH (*with a smile*) : " Sir, we are very free and easy with our words. But M. is sitting there with his lips shut tight. What in the world is passing through his mind ? What do you say about it, sir ? "

MASTER (*with a laugh*) : " There is a common adage that tells people to beware of the following : a man with a loose tongue, a man whose mind cannot be fathomed even by an expert diver, a man who sticks the sacred tulsi-leaf in his ears as a sign of holiness, a woman wearing a long veil to proclaim her chastity, and the cold water of a reservoir covered with green scum, by bathing in which one gets typhoid fever. These are all dangerous things. (*With a smile*) But it is different with M. He is a serious man." (*All laugh.*)

CHUNILAL : " People have begun to whisper about M.'s conduct. The younger Naren and Baburam are his students, as are Naran, Paltu, Purna, and Tejchandra. The rumour is that he brings these boys to you and so they neglect their studies. The boys' guardians hold M. responsible."

MASTER : " But who would believe their words ? "

They were thus talking when Naran entered the room and bowed low before the Master. He was a student seventeen or eighteen years old and of fair complexion. He was dearly loved by the Master, who was very eager to see the boy and feed him. Many a time at the temple garden at Dakshineswar the Master wept silently for Naran. He looked on him as the manifestation of Narayana Himself.

GIRISH (*at the sight of Naran*) : " There ! Who told him about this ? Now we realize that M. is at the root of all the mischief." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Stop ! Hold your tongue. There is already an evil rumour about him."

The conversation next turned to Narendra.

A DEVOTEE : " Why doesn't he come to you so frequently nowadays ? "

MASTER (*quoting a proverb*) : " Man's worries over bread and butter are simply amazing : they make even Kalidasa lose his wits."

BALARAM : " Narendra frequently visits his friend Annada Guha of the family of Shiva Guha."

MASTER : " Yes, I have heard that too. Narendra and his friends meet at the house of a government officer and conduct meetings of the Brahmo Samaj there."

A DEVOTEE : " The officer's name is Tarapada."

BALARAM (*smiling*) : " The brahmins say that Annada Guha is a very egotistic man."

MASTER : " Never listen to what the brahmins say. You know their nature very well. If a man doesn't give them money, they will call him bad ; on the other hand, if a man is generous to them, they will call him good. (*All laugh.*) I know Annada. He is a good man."

The drawing-room was full of devotees. The Master wanted to hear some songs. At his request Tarapada sang about Krishna :

O Kesava, bestow Thy grace  
Upon Thy luckless servants here !  
O Kesava, who dost delight  
To roam Vrindavan's glades and groves !

O Madhava, our mind's Bewitcher !  
Sweet One, who dost steal our hearts,  
Sweetly playing on Thy flute !

(Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,  
Sing aloud the name of Hari,  
Praise Lord Hari's name !)

O Thou Eternal Youth of Vraja,  
Tamer of fierce Kaliya,  
Slayer of the afflicted's fear !



Beloved, with the arching eyes  
And crest with arching peacock feather,  
Charmer of Sri Radha's heart !

Govardhan's mighty Lifter, Thou,  
All garlanded with sylvan flowers !  
O Damodara, Kamsa's Scourge !

O Dark One, who dost sport in bliss  
With sweet Vrindavan's gopi maids !

(Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,  
Sing aloud the name of Hari,  
Praise Lord Hari's name !)

MASTER (to Girish) : " Ah ! It is a beautiful song. Did you write it ? "

A DEVOTEE : " Yes, sir, he wrote all the songs for his play, the *Chaitanyalila*."

MASTER : " This one has really hit the mark."

At Sri Ramakrishna's request Tarapada sang two more songs. In the first, Nitai exhorts people to share Radha's love for Sri Krishna :

Come one and all ! Take Radha's love !  
The high tide of her love flows by ;  
It will not last for very long.  
Oh, come then ! Come ye, one and all !  
In countless streams it flows from her ;  
As much as you desire is yours.

Made all of love, she pours out love  
Unstintingly for everyone ;  
Her love intoxicates the heart  
With heavenly bliss, and thrills the soul.  
Oh, come and sing Lord Hari's name,  
Drawn by her love. Oh, come ye all !

Next he sang about Gauranga :

Who art Thou, Gaur of the golden hue,  
That quenchest the thirst of my soul ?  
Thou raisest a storm in the sea of Love,  
And scarcely can I steady my boat.

Once as a cowherd boy in Vrindavan  
Thou didst tend the cows ;  
In Thy hands Thou heldest the flute  
That so bewitched the gopi maids.

Lifting Govardhan's mount in Thine arms,  
Thou shieldedst Vrindavan from ill ;  
And at the wounded gopis' feet  
Humbledst Thyself in repentant love.

The devotees pressed M. to sing ; but M. was shy and asked them in a whisper to excuse him.

GIRISH (*to the Master*) : "Sir, we can't find a way to persuade M. to sing."

MASTER (*annoyed*) : "Yes, he can bare his teeth at school, but shyness overpowers him when he is asked to sing !"

M., feeling greatly distressed, remained speechless.

Suresh Mitra, a beloved householder disciple of the Master, was seated at a distance. The Master cast an affectionate glance at him and said to him, pointing to Girish, "You talk of having lived a wild life, but here is one you could not surpass."

SURESH (*with a smile*) : "Yes, sir, he is my elder brother in that respect." (*All laugh.*)

GIRISH (*to the Master*) : "Well, sir, I didn't have any education during my boyhood, but still people say I am a learned man."

MASTER : "Mahimacharan has studied many scriptures. A big man. (*To M.*) Isn't that so ?"

M : "Yes, sir."

GIRISH : "What ? Book-learning ? I have seen enough of it. It can't fool me any more."

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "Do you know my attitude ? Books, scriptures, and things like that only point out the way to reach God. After finding the way, what more need is there of books and scriptures ? Then comes the time for action."

"A man received a letter from home informing him that certain presents were to be sent to his relatives. The names of the articles were given in the letter. As he was about to go shopping for them, he found that the letter was missing. He began anxiously to search for it, several others joining in the search. For a long time they continued to search. When at last the letter was discovered, his joy knew no bounds. With great eagerness he opened the letter and read it. It said that he was to buy five seers of sweets, a piece of cloth, and a few other things. Then he did not need the letter any more, for it had served its purpose. Putting it aside, he went out to buy the things. How long is such a letter necessary ? As long as its contents are not known. When the contents are known one proceeds to carry out the directions."

"In the scriptures you will find the way to realize God. But after getting all the information about the path, you must begin to work. Only then can you attain your goal."

"What will it avail a man to have mere scholarship ? A pundit may have studied many scriptures, he may recite many sacred texts, but if he is still attached to the world and if inwardly he loves 'woman and gold', then he has not assimilated the contents of the scriptures. For such a man the study of scriptures is futile."

"The almanac forecasts the rainfall for the year. You may squeeze the book, but you won't get a drop of water—not even a single drop." (*Laughter.*)

GIRISH (*smiling*) : "What did you say, sir, about squeezing the almanac ? Won't a single drop of water come out of it ?" (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "The pundits talk big, but where is their mind fixed ? On 'woman and gold', on creature comforts and money. The culture

soars very high in the sky, but its eyes are fixed on the charnel-pit. It is continually looking for charnel-pits, carcasses, and dead bodies.

(To Girish) "Narendra is a boy of a very high order. He excels in every thing : vocal and instrumental music and studies. Again, he has control over his sense-organs. He is truthful and has discrimination and dispassion. So many virtues in one person ! (To M.) What do you say ? Isn't he unusually good ?"

M : "Yes, sir, he is."

MASTER (*aside to M.*) : "He [meaning Girish] has great earnestness and faith."

M. looked at Girish, and marvelled at his tremendous faith. Girish had been coming to Sri Ramakrishna only a short time and had already recognized his spiritual power. To M. he seemed a familiar friend and kinsman, related to him by the strong bond of spirituality. Girish was one of the gems in the necklace of the Master's devotees.

Narayan asked the Master whether he would sing. Sri Ramakrishna sang of the Divine Mother :

Cherish my precious Mother Syama  
Tenderly within, O mind ;  
May you and I alone behold Her,  
Letting no one else intrude.

O mind, in solitude enjoy Her,  
Keeping the passions all outside ;  
Take but the tongue, that now and again  
It may cry out, "O Mother ! Mother !"

Suffer no breath of base desire  
To enter and approach us there,  
But bid true knowledge stand on guard,  
Alert and watchful evermore.

Then he sang, as if he were one of the afflicted souls of the world :

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,  
Do not deprive Thy worthless child of bliss !  
My mind knows nothing but Thy Lotus Feet. .  
The King of Death scowls at me terribly ;  
Tell me, Mother, what shall I say to him ? . .

Again he sang about the bliss of the Divine Mother :

Behold my Mother playing with Siva, lost in an ecstasy of joy !  
Drunk with a draught of celestial wine, She reels and yet She  
does not fall. . . .

The devotees listened to the songs in deep silence. After a few moments Sri Ramakrishna said, "I have a slight cold ; so I couldn't sing well."

Gradually it became dusk. The shadow of evening fell on Calcutta. For the moment the noise of the busy metropolis was stilled. Gongs and conchshells proclaimed the evening worship in many Hindu homes. Devotees of God set aside their worldly duties and turned their minds to prayer and meditation,

This joining of day and night, this mystic twilight, always created an ecstatic mood in the Master.

The devotees seated in the room looked at Sri Ramakrishna as he began to chant the sweet name of the Divine Mother. After the chanting he began to pray. What was the need of prayer to a soul in constant communion with God? Did he not rather want to teach erring mortals how to pray? Addressing the Divine Mother, he said: "O Mother, I throw myself on Thy mercy; I take shelter at Thy Hallowed Feet. I do not want bodily comforts; I do not crave name and fame; I do not seek the eight occult powers. Be gracious and grant that I may have pure love for Thee, a love unsmitten by desire, untainted by any selfish ends—a love craved by the devotee for the sake of love alone. And grant me the favour, O Mother, that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya, that I may never be attached to the world, to 'woman and gold', conjured up by Thy inscrutable maya! O Mother, there is no one but Thee whom I may call my own. Mother, I do not know how to worship; I am without austerity; I have neither devotion nor knowledge. Be gracious, Mother, and out of Thy infinite mercy grant me love for Thy Lotus Feet."

Every word of this prayer, uttered from the depths of his soul, stirred the minds of the devotees. The melody of his voice and childlike simplicity of his face touched their hearts very deeply.

Girish invited the Master to his house, saying that he must go there that very night.

MASTER: "Don't you think it will be late?"

GIRISH: "No, sir, You may return any time you like. I shall have to go to the theatre tonight to settle a quarrel there."

It was nine o'clock in the evening when the Master was ready to start for Girish's house. Since Balaram had prepared supper for him, Sri Ramakrishna said to Balaram: "Please send the food you have prepared for me to Girish's. I shall enjoy it there." He did not want to hurt Balaram's feelings.

As the Master was coming down from the second floor of Balaram's house, he became filled with divine ecstasy. He looked as if he were drunk. Narayan and M. were by his side; a little behind came Ram, Chuni, and the other devotees. No sooner did he reach the ground floor than he became totally overwhelmed. Narayan came forward to hold him by the hand lest he should miss his footing and fall. The Master expressed annoyance at this. A few minutes later he said to Narayan affectionately: "If you hold me by the hand people may think I am drunk. I shall walk by myself."

Girish's house was not far away. The Master passed the crossing at Bosepara Lane. Suddenly he began to walk faster. The devotees were left behind. Presently Narendra was seen coming from a distance. At other times the Master's joy would have been unbounded at the thought of Narendra or at the mere mention of his name; but now he did not even exchange a word with his beloved disciple.

As the Master and the devotees entered the lane where Girish lived, he was able to utter words. He said to Narendra: "Are you quite well, my



child ? I could not talk to you then." Every word the Master spoke was full of infinite tenderness. He had not yet reached the door of Girish's house, when suddenly he stopped and said, looking at Narendra : " I want to tell you something. ' This ' is one and ' that ' is another." Who could know what was passing through his innermost soul at that moment ?

Girish stood at the door to welcome the Master. As Sri Ramakrishna entered the house, Girish fell at his feet and lay there on the floor like a rod. At the Master's bidding he stood up, touching the Master's feet with his forehead. Sri Ramakrishna was taken to the drawing-room on the second floor. The devotees followed him and sat down, eager to get a view of the Master and listen to every word that fell from his lips.

As Sri Ramakrishna was about to take the seat reserved for him, he saw a newspaper lying near it. He signed to someone to remove the paper. Since a newspaper contains worldly matters—gossip and scandal—he regarded it as unholy. After the paper was removed he took his seat. Nityagopal came forward and bowed low before the Master.

MASTER : " Well ! You haven't been to Dakshineswar for a long time."

NITYAGOPAL : " True, sir. I haven't been able to go there. I haven't been well. I have had pains all over my body."

MASTER : " How are you now ?"

NITYAGOPAL : " Not so well, sir."

MASTER : " Bring your mind down one or two notes."

NITYAGOPAL : " I don't like people's company. They say all kinds of things about me. That sometimes frightens me, but again I feel great strength within."

MASTER : " That's only natural. Who lives with you ?"

NITYAGOPAL : " Tarak.' He is always with me. But sometimes he too gets on my nerves."

MASTER : " Nangta told me that there lived at his monastery an ascetic who had acquired occult powers. He used to go about with his eyes fixed on the sky. But when one of his companions left him, he became disconsolate."

Again the Master went into an ecstatic mood. Strange thoughts seemed to stir his mind and he remained speechless. After a while he said : " Art Thou come ? I too am here." Who could pretend to understand these words ?

Many of his devotees were in the room : Narendra, Girish, Ram, Haripada, Chuni, Balaram, and M. Narendra did not believe that God could incarnate Himself in a human body. But Girish differed with him ; he had the burning faith that from time to time the Almighty Lord, through His inscrutable Power, assumes a human body and descends to earth to serve a divine purpose.

The Master said to Girish, " I should like to hear you and Narendra argue in English."

The discussion began ; but they talked in Bengali. Narendra said : " God is Infinity. How is it possible for us to comprehend Him ? He dwells in every human being. It is not the case that He manifests Himself through one person only."

<sup>1</sup> A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna later known as Swami Shivananda.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*tenderly*): "I quite agree with Narendra. God is everywhere. But then you must remember that there are different manifestations of His Power in different beings. At some places there is a manifestation of His avidyasakti, at others a manifestation of His vidyasakti. Through different instruments God's Power is manifest in different degrees, greater and smaller. Therefore all men are not equal."

RAM: "What is the use of these futile arguments?"

MASTER (*sharply*): "No! No! There is a meaning in all this."

GIRISH (*to Narendra*): "How do you know that God does not assume a human body?"

NARENDRA: "God is 'beyond words or thought'."

MASTER: "No, that is not true. He can be known by the pure buddhi, which is the same as the Pure Self. The seers of old directly perceived the Pure Self through their pure buddhi."

GIRISH (*to Narendra*): "Unless God Himself teaches men through His human Incarnation, who else will teach them spiritual mysteries? God takes a human body to teach men divine knowledge and divine love. Otherwise, who will teach?"

NARENDRA: "Why, God dwells in our own heart; He will certainly teach us from within the heart."

MASTER (*tenderly*): "Yes, yes. He will teach us as our Inner Guide."

Gradually Narendra and Girish became involved in a heated discussion. If God is Infinity, how can He have parts? What did Hamilton say? What were the views of Herbert Spencer, of Tyndall, of Huxley? And so forth and so on.

MASTER (*to M.*): "I don't enjoy these discussions. Why should I argue at all? I clearly see that God is everything; He Himself has become all. I see that whatever is, is God. He is everything; again, He is beyond everything. I come to a state in which my mind and intellect merge in the Indivisible. At the sight of Narendra my mind loses itself in the consciousness of the Absolute. (*To Girish*) What do you say to that?"

GIRISH (*with a smile*): "Why ask me? As if I understood everything except that one point!" (*All laugh.*)

MASTER: "Again, I cannot utter a word unless I come down at least two steps from the plane of samadhi. Sankara's Non-dualistic explanation of Vedanta is true, and so is the Qualified Non-dualistic interpretation of Ramanuja."

NARENDRA: "What is Qualified Non-dualism?"

MASTER: "It is the theory of Ramanuja. According to this theory, Brahman, or the Absolute, is qualified by the universe and its living beings. These three—Brahman, the world, and living beings—together constitute One. Take the instance of a bel-fruit. A man wanted to know the weight of the fruit. He separated the shell, the flesh, and the seeds. But can a man get the weight by weighing only the flesh? He must weigh flesh, shell, and seeds together. At first it appears that the real thing in the fruit is the flesh, and not its seeds or shell. Then by reasoning you find that the shell, seeds,

and flesh all belong to the fruit ; the shell and seeds belong to the same thing that the flesh belongs to. Likewise, in spiritual discrimination one must first reason, following the method of ' Not this, not this ' : God is not the universe ; God is not the living beings ; Brahman alone is real and all else is unreal. Then one realizes, as with the bel-fruit, that the Reality from which we derive the notion of Brahman is the very Reality that evolves the idea of living beings and the universe. The Nitya and the Lila are the two aspects of one and the same Reality ; therefore, according to Ramanuja, Brahman is qualified by the universe and the living beings. This is the theory of Qualified Non-dualism.

(To M.) " I do see God directly. What shall I reason about ? I clearly see that He Himself has become everything ; that He Himself has become the universe and all living beings.

" But without awakening one's own inner consciousness one cannot realize the All-pervading Consciousness. How long does a man reason ? So long as he has not realized God. But mere words will not do. As for myself, I clearly see that He Himself has become everything. The inner consciousness must be awakened through the grace of God. Through this awakening a man goes into samadhi. He often forgets that he has a body. He gets rid of his attachment to ' woman and gold ' and does not enjoy any talk unless it is about God. Worldly talk gives him pain. Through the awakening of the inner consciousness one realizes the All-pervading Consciousness."

The discussion came to a close. Sri Ramakrishna said to M. : " I have observed that a man acquires one kind of knowledge about God through reasoning and another kind through meditation ; but he acquires a third kind of Knowledge about God when God reveals Himself to him, His devotee. If God Himself reveals to His devotee the nature of Divine Incarnation—how He plays in human form—, then the devotee doesn't have to reason about the problem or need an explanation. Do you know what it is like ? Suppose a man is in a dark room. He goes on rubbing a match against a match-box and all of a sudden light comes. Likewise, if God gives us this flash of divine light, all our doubts are destroyed. Can one ever know God by mere reasoning ? "

Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra to sit by his side. He tenderly inquired about his health and showed him much affection.

NARENDRA (to the Master) : " Why, I have meditated on Kali for three or four days, but nothing has come of it." •

MASTER : " All in good time, my child. Kali is none other than Brahman. That which is called Brahman is really Kali. She is the Primal Energy. When that Energy remains inactive, I call It Brahman, and when It creates, preserves, or destroys, I call It Sakti or Kali. What you call Brahman I call Kali,

" Brahman and Kali are not different. They are like fire and its power to burn : if one thinks of fire one must think of its power to burn. If one recognizes Kali one must also recognize Brahman ; again, if one recognizes Brahman one must recognize Kali. Brahman and Its Power are identical. It is Brahman whom I address as Sakti or Kali."

It was late at night. Girish asked Haripada to call a cab, for he had to go to the theatre. As Haripada was about to leave the room the Master said with a smile : " Mind, a cab. Don't forget to bring one." (*All laugh.*)

HARIPADA (*smiling*) : " Yes, sir. I am going out just for that. How can I forget it ? "

GIRISH : " That I should have to go to the theatre and leave you here ! "

MASTER : " No, no. You must hold to both. King Janaka paid attention to both religious and worldly duties and ' drank his milk from a brimming cup '. " (*All laugh.*)

GIRISH : " I have been thinking of leaving the theatre to the youngsters. "

MASTER : " No, no. It is all right. You are doing good to many. "

Narendra said in a whisper, " Just a moment ago he [meaning Girish] was calling him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] God, an Incarnation, and now he is attracted to the theatre ! "

Narendra was sitting beside the Master. The latter looked at him intently and suddenly moved closer to his beloved disciple. Narendra did not believe in God's assuming a human body ; but what did that matter ? Sri Ramakrishna's heart overflowed with more and more love for his disciple. He touched Narendra's body and said, quoting from a song :

Do you ' feel that your pride is wounded ?  
So be it, then ; we too have our pride.

Then the Master said to Narendra : " As long as a man argues about God, he has not realized Him. You two were arguing. I didn't like it.

" How long does one hear noise and uproar in a house where a big feast is being given ? So long as the guests are not seated for the meal. As soon as food is served and people begin to eat, three quarters of the noise disappears. (*All laugh.*) When the dessert is served there is still less noise. But when the guests eat the last course, buttermilk, then one hears nothing but the sound ' soop, sup '. When the meal is over, the guests retire to sleep and all is quiet.

" The nearer you approach to God, the less you reason and argue. When you attain Him, then all sounds—all reasoning and disputing—come to an end. Ther you go into samadhi—sleep—, into communion with God in silence."

The Master gently stroked Narendra's body and affectionately touched his chin, uttering sweetly the holy words, " Hari Om ! Hari Om ! Hari Om ! " He was fast becoming unconscious of the outer world. His hand was on Narendra's foot. Still in that mood he gently stroked Narendra's body. Slowly a change came over his mind. With folded hands he said to Narendra : " Sing a song, please ; then I shall be all right. How else shall I be able to stand on my own legs ? " Again he became speechless. He sat motionless as a statue. Presently he became intoxicated with divine love and said : " O Radha, watch your step ! Otherwise you may fall into the Jamuna. Ah ! How mad she is with love of Krishna ! "

<sup>1</sup> These words are addressed to Radha, the beloved of Krishna, by her companions, the gopis.



The Master was in a rapturous mood. Quoting from a song, he said :

Tell me, friend, how far is the grove  
Where Krishna, my Beloved, dwells ?  
His fragrance reaches me even here,  
But I am tired and can walk no farther.

Then the Master completely forgot the outer world. He did not notice anyone in the room, not even his beloved Narendra seated by his side. He did not know where he himself was seated. He was totally merged in God. Suddenly he stood up, shouting, "Deep drunk with the Wine of Divine Love !" As he took his seat again, he muttered, "I see a light coming, but I know not whence it comes."

Now Narendra sang :

Lord, Thou hast lifted all my sorrow with the vision of Thy face,  
And the magic of Thy beauty has bewitched my mind ;  
Beholding Thee, the seven worlds forget their never-ending woe ;  
What shall I say, then, of myself, a poor and lowly soul ? . . .

Listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna again went into deep samadhi. His eyes were closed and his body was transfixed.

Coming down from the ecstatic mood he looked around and said, "Who will take me to the temple garden ?" He appeared like a child who felt confused in the absence of his companion.

It was late in the evening. The night was dark. The devotees stood by the carriage that had been brought to take the Master to Dakshineswar. They helped him in gently, for he was still in deep ecstasy. The carriage moved down the street and they looked after it with wistful eyes.

Soon the devotees turned homeward, a gentle south wind blowing in their faces. Some were humming the lines of the song :

Lord, Thou hast lifted all my sorrow with the vision of Thy face,  
And the magic of Thy beauty has bewitched my mind.

April 6, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna sat in the drawing-room of Balaram's house talking to M. It was a very hot day and long past three o'clock. He had come to Calcutta to see some of his young disciples and also to visit Devendra's house.

MASTER (to M.) : "I gave my word that I would be here at three o'clock ; so I have come. But it is very hot."

M : "Yes, sir, you must have suffered very much."

The devotees were fanning Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER : "I have come here for Baburam and the younger Naren. Why haven't you brought Purna ?"

M : "He doesn't like to come to a gathering of people. He is afraid you might praise him before others and his relatives might then hear about it."

MASTER : "Yes, that's true. I won't do it in the future. Well, I understand that you are giving Purna religious instruction. That is fine."

M : "As a matter of fact, the same thing is written in one of the textbooks of the school. It says :

With all thy soul love God above ;  
And as thyself thy neighbour love.

If their guardians are displeased with such teachings, it can't be helped."

MASTER : "No doubt many things like that are written in those books ; but the authors themselves do not assimilate what they write. This power of assimilation comes from associating with holy men. People listen to instruction only when it is given by a sadhu who has truly renounced the world ; they are not much impressed by the writings or the words of a mere scholar. Suppose a physician has a big jar of molasses by his side, and he asks his patients not to eat molasses ; the patients won't pay much attention to his advice.

"Well how do you find Purna ? Does he go into ecstatic moods ?"

M : "No, I haven't noticed in him any outer sign of such emotion. One day I told him those words of yours."

MASTER : "What words ?"

M : "You told us that if a man is a 'small receptacle' he cannot control spiritual emotion ; but if he is a 'large receptacle' he experiences intense emotion without showing it outwardly. You said that a big lake does not become disturbed when an elephant enters it ; but when the elephant enters a pool, one sees tremendous confusion and the water splashes on the banks."

MASTER : "Purna will not show his emotion outwardly ; he hasn't that kind of temperament. His other signs are good. What do you say ?"

M : "His eyes are very bright and prominent."

MASTER : "Mere bright eyes are not enough. The eyes of a godly person are different. Did you ask him what he felt after meeting me ?"

M : "Yes, sir, we talked about that. He has been telling me for the last four or five days that whenever he thinks of God or repeats His name, tears flow from his eyes and the hair on his body stands on end—such is his joy."

MASTER : "Indeed ! That's all he needs."

The Master and M. were silent a few moments. Then M. said, "He is waiting—"

MASTER : "Who ?"

M : "Purna. Perhaps he has been standing at the door of his house. When any of us passes that way he will come running and salute us."

MASTER : "Ah ! Ah !"

Sri Ramakrishna was resting, reclining against a bolster. M. had brought with him a twelve-year-old boy who was a student in his school. His name was Kshirode.

M : "He is a nice boy. He finds great joy in spiritual talk."

MASTER (smiling) : "He has eyes like a deer's."

The boy saluted Sri Ramakrishna, touching his feet. Then he gently stroked the Master's feet.

MASTER (to M.) : "Rakhal is staying at home now ; he has an abscess and is not well. I understand that his wife expects a baby."

Paltu and Binode were seated in front of Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER (to Paltu, smiling) : "What did you say to your father ? (To M.) He answered back when his father told him not to come here. (To Paltu) What did you say ?"

PALTU : "I said to him : 'Yes, I go to him. Is that wrong ?' (The Master and M. laugh.) I shall say more if necessary."

MASTER (to M., smiling) : "No, no ! Should he go so far ?"

M : "No, sir, he should not go too far." (Sri Ramakrishna laughs.)

MASTER (to Binode) : "How are you ? Why haven't you come to Dakshineswar ?"

BINODE : "I almost came, but then I was afraid of falling ill again. I have been ill and am not doing well."

MASTER : "Come to Dakshineswar with me. The air is very good there. You will recover."

The younger Naren entered the room. Sri Ramakrishna was going out to wash his hands and face. The younger Naren followed him with a towel ; he wanted to pour water for the Master. M. was with them.

MASTER : "It's very hot today."

M : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "How do you live in that small room of yours ? Doesn't it get very hot on the upper floor ?"

M : "Yes, sir, it gets very hot."

MASTER : "Besides, your wife has been suffering from brain trouble. You should keep her in a cool room."

M : "Yes, sir. I have asked her to sleep downstairs."

Sri Ramakrishna returned to the drawing-room and took his seat.

MASTER (to M.) : "Why didn't you come to Dakshineswar last Sunday ?"

M : "Sir, there was no one else at home. My wife was not well and no one was there to look after her."

Sri Ramakrishna was on his way in a carriage to Devendra's house in Nimu Goswami's Lane. The younger Naren, M., and one or two other devotees were with him. The Master felt great yearning for Purna. He began to talk of the young disciple.

MASTER (to M.) : A great soul ! Or how could he make me do japa for his welfare ? But Purna doesn't know anything about it."

M. and the other devotees were amazed at these words.

MASTER : "It would have been nice if you had brought him here with you today. Why didn't you ?"

Seeing the younger Naren laugh, the Master and the other devotees laughed too. The Master said to M., laughing and pointing to Naren : "Look at him ! Look ! How naive he looks when he laughs, as if he knew nothing. He never thinks of these three things : land, wife, and money. God cannot be realized unless the mind is totally free from 'woman and gold'."

The carriage proceeded to Devendra's house. Once Sri Ramakrishna had said to Devendra at Dakshineswar, "I have been thinking of visiting your

house one day." Devendra had replied : " The same idea came to my mind today, and I have come here to ask that favour of you. You must grace my house this Sunday." " But ", the Master had said, " you have a small income. Don't invite many people. The carriage hire will also run to a big amount." Devendra had answered, laughing : " What if my income is small ? ' One can run into debt to eat butter ! ' " At these words Sri Ramakrishna had laughed a long time.

Soon the carriage reached Devendra's house. Sri Ramakrishna said to him : " Devendra, don't make elaborate arrangements for my meal. Something very simple will do. I am not very well today."

Sri Ramakrishna seated himself in the drawing-room on the ground floor of Devendra's house. The devotees sat around him. It was evening. The room was well lighted. The younger Naren, Ram, M., Girish, Devendra, Akshay, Upendra, and some other devotees were present. As the Master cast his glance on a young devotee, his face beamed with joy. Pointing to the devotee, Sri Ramakrishna said to the others : " He is totally free from attachment to land, wife, and money, the three things that entangle one in worldliness. The mind that dwells on these three cannot be fixed on God. He saw a vision, too. (*To the devotee*) Tell us, what did you see ? "

DEVOTEE (*laughing*) : " I saw a heap of dung. Some were seated on it, and some sat at a distance."

MASTER : " It was a vision of the plight of the worldly people who are forgetful of God. It shows that all these desires are disappearing from his mind. Need one worry about anything if one's mind is detached from ' woman and gold ' ? How strange ! Only after much meditation and japa could I get rid of these desires ; and how quickly he could banish them from his mind ! Is it an easy matter to get rid of lust ? I myself felt a queer sensation in my heart six months after I had begun my spiritual practice. Then I threw myself on the ground under a tree and wept bitterly. I said to the Divine Mother, ' Mother, if it comes to that, I shall certainly cut my throat with a knife ! '

(*To the devotees*) " If the mind is free from ' woman and gold ', then what else can obstruct a man ? He enjoys then only the Bliss of Brahman."

Sashi<sup>2</sup> had recently been visiting Sri Ramakrishna. He was studying at the Vidyasagar College for his Bachelor's degree. The Master began to talk about him.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " That boy will think of money for some time. But there are some who will never do so. Some of the youngsters will not marry."

The devotees listened silently to the Master.

MASTER : " It is hard to recognize an Incarnation of God unless the mind is totally free from ' woman and gold '. A man asked a seller of egg-plants the value of a diamond. He said, ' I can give nine seers of egg-plants in exchange, and not one more.' " "

<sup>2</sup> Sashi later became a monastic disciple of the Master and assumed the name of Swami Ramakrishnananda.

<sup>1</sup> The story is given on p. 666.



At these words all the devotees laughed. The younger Naren laughed very loudly. Sri Ramakrishna noticed that he had quickly understood the implication of these words.

MASTER : "What a subtle mind he has ! Nangta also could understand things that way, in a flash—the meaning of the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, and other scriptures.

"Renunciation of 'woman and gold' from boyhood ! Amazing indeed ! It falls to the lot of a very few. A person without such renunciation is like a mango struck by a hail-stone. The fruit cannot be offered to the Deity, and even a man hesitates to eat it.

"There are people who during their youth committed many sins, but in old age chant the name of God. Well, that is better than nothing.

"The mother of a certain Mallick, who belonged to a very noble family, asked me if prostitutes would ever be saved. She herself had led that kind of life ; that is why she asked the question. I said : 'Yes, they too will be saved, if only they cry to God with a yearning heart and promise not to repeat their sins.' What will the mere chanting of Hari's name accomplish ? One must weep sincerely."

The kirtan began to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. The singer was a professional. He sang about Sri Gauranga's initiation as a monk by Keshab Bharati :

Oh, what a vision I have beheld in Keshab Bharati's hut !  
Gora, in all his matchless grace,  
Shedding tears in a thousand streams ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna went into ecstasy when he heard the song. The musician sang again, describing the suffering of a milkmaid of Vrindavan at her separation from Sri Krishna. She was seeking her Krishna in the madhavi<sup>5</sup> bower :

O madhavi, give me back my Sweet One !  
Give me, give me back my Sweet One !  
Give Him back, for He is mine,  
And make me your slave for ever.  
He is my life, as water is to the fish ;  
O madhavi, you have hidden Him in your bosom !  
I am a simple, guileless girl,  
And you have stolen my Beloved.  
O madhavi, I die for my Sweet One ;  
I cannot bear to live without Him.  
Without my Madhava<sup>6</sup> I shall die ;  
Oh, give Him, give Him back to me !

Now and then Sri Ramakrishna sang with the musicians, improvising lines :

How far from here is Mathura,  
Where dwells the Beloved of my soul ?

<sup>5</sup> A spring creeper with fragrant flowers.

<sup>6</sup> A name of Krishna.

Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. His body was motionless. He remained in that state a long time.

Gradually he came down to the consciousness of the outer world. Still in a spiritual mood, he began to talk, sometimes addressing the devotees, sometimes the Divine Mother.

MASTER : " Mother, please attract him to Thee. I can't worry about him any more. (*To M.*) My mind is inclined a little to your brother-in-law.

(*To Girish*) " You utter many abusive and vulgar words ; but that doesn't matter. It is better for these things to come out. There are some people who fall ill on account of blood-poisoning ; the more the poisoned blood finds an outlet, the better it is for them. At the time when the upadhi of a man is being destroyed, it makes a loud noise, as it were. Wood crackles when it burns ; there is no more noise when the burning is over.

" You will be purer day by day. You will improve very much day by day. People will marvel at you.

" I may not come many more times ; but that doesn't matter. You will succeed by yourself."

The Master's spiritual mood became very intense. Again he talked to the Divine Mother.

MASTER : " Mother, what credit is there in making a man good who is already good ? O Mother, what wilt Thou accomplish by killing one who is already dead ? Only if Thou canst kill a person who is still standing erect wilt Thou show Thy glory."

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent a few moments. Suddenly he said in a slightly raised voice : " I have come from Dakshineswar. I am going, Mother ! " It was as if a child had heard the call of its mother from a distance and was responding to it. He again became motionless, absorbed in samadhi. The devotees looked at him with unwinking eyes. Still in an ecstatic mood he said, " I shall not eat any more luchi." At this point a few Vaishnava priests, who had come from the neighbourhood, left the place.

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk with his devotees in a very joyous spirit. It was the month of April and the day was very sultry. Devendra had made ice-cream. He offered it to the Master and the devotees. M. said in a low voice, " Encore ! Encore ! " The devotees laughed. At the sight of the ice-cream Sri Ramakrishna was happy as a child.

MASTER : " The kirtan was very nice. The song described beautifully the gopis' state of mind : ' O madhavi, give me back my Sweet One ! ' The milkmaids of Vrindavan were drunk with ecstatic love for Krishna. How wonderful ! Mad for Krishna ! "

A devotee, pointing to another devotee, said, " He has the attitude of the gopis."

RAM : " No, he has both—the attitude of tender love and the attitude of austere knowledge."

MASTER : " What is it you are talking about ? "

Sri Ramakrishna inquired about Surendra.

RAM : " I sent him word, but he hasn't come."

MASTER : " He gets very tired from his heavy office-work."

A DEVOTEE : " Ram Babu has been writing about you."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " What is he writing ?"

DEVOTEE : " He is writing an article on ' The Bhakti of the Paramahansa '."

MASTER : " Good ! That will make Ram famous."

GIRISH (*smiling*) : " He says he is your disciple."

MASTER : " I have no disciple. I am the servant of the servant of Rama."

Some people of the neighbourhood had dropped in ; but they did not please the Master. He said : " What sort of place is this ? I don't find a single pious soul here."

Devendra took Sri Ramakrishna into the inner apartments and offered him refreshments. Afterwards the Master returned to the drawing-room with a happy face and took his seat. The devotees sat around him. Upendra<sup>7</sup> and Akshay<sup>8</sup> sat on either side of him and stroked his feet. The Master spoke highly of the women of Devendra's family, saying : " They are very nice. They come from the country ; so they are very pious."

The Master was absorbed in his own joy. In a happy mood he began to sing :

Unless a man is simple, he cannot recognize God, the Simple  
One. . . .

Again he sang :

Stay your steps, O wandering monk !  
Stand there with begging-bowl in hand,  
And let me behold your radiant face. . . .

Once more :

A mendicant has come to us, ever absorbed in divine moods ;  
Holy alike is he to Hindu and Mussalman. . . .

Girish saluted the Master and took his leave. Devendra and the other devotees took the Master to his carriage. Seeing that one of his neighbours was sound asleep on a bench in the courtyard, Devendra woke him up. The neighbour rubbed his eyes and said, " Has the Paramahansa come ? " All burst into laughter. The man had come a long time before Sri Ramakrishna's arrival, and because of the heat had spread a mat on the bench, lain down, and gone sound asleep.

Sri Ramakrishna's carriage proceeded to Dakshineswar. He said to M. happily, " I have eaten a good deal of ice-cream ; bring four or five cones for me when you come to Dakshineswar." Continuing, he said, " Now my mind is drawn to these few youngsters : the younger Naren, Purna, and your brother-in-law."

M : " Do you mean Dwija ? "

MASTER : " No, he is all right ; I mean his elder brother."

The carriage rolled on to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.

<sup>7</sup> Later a famous publisher in Calcutta.

<sup>8</sup> The author of a life of Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali verse.

## XXXIX

### THE MASTER'S REMINISCENCES

*April 12, 1885*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting with the devotees in Balaram's drawing-room in Calcutta. M. arrived at three o'clock. Girish, Balaram, the younger Naren, Paltu, Dwija, Purna, Mahendra Mukherji, and many other devotees were there. Shortly Trailokya Sannyal, Jaygopal Sen, and other members of the Brahmo Samaj arrived. Many woman devotees were present also, seated behind a screen. Among them was Mohini's wife, who had almost gone insane on account of her son's death. There were a few other afflicted souls like her who used to visit the Master to obtain peace of mind.

Sri Ramakrishna was describing to the devotees the various incidents of his sadhana and the phases of his spiritual realization.

MASTER : " During my sadhana, when I meditated, I would actually see a person sitting near me with a trident in his hand. He would threaten to strike me with the weapon unless I fixed my mind on the Lotus Feet of God, warning me that it would pierce my breast if my mind strayed from God.

" The Divine Mother would put me in such a state that sometimes my mind would come down from the Nitya to the Lila, and sometimes go up from the Lila to the Nitya.

" Sometimes, when the mind descended to the Lila, I would meditate day and night on Sita and Rama. At those times I would constantly behold the forms of Sita and Rama. Ramlala<sup>1</sup> was my constant companion. Sometimes I would bathe Him and sometimes feed Him.

" Again, I used to be absorbed in the ideal of Radha and Krishna and would constantly see their forms. Or again, I would be absorbed in Gauranga. He is the harmonization of two ideals : the Purusha and the Prakriti. At such times I would always see the form of Gauranga.

" Then a change came over me. The mind left the plane of the Lila and ascended to the Nitya. I found no distinction between the sacred tulsi and the ordinary sajina plant. I no longer enjoyed seeing the forms of God ; I said to myself, ' They come and go.' I lifted my mind above them. I removed all the pictures of gods and goddesses from my room and began to meditate

<sup>1</sup> A metal image of the Boy Rama given to Sri Ramakrishna during his sadhana period by a Vaishnava saint.



on the Primal Purusha, the Indivisible Satchidananda, regarding myself as His handmaid.

"I practised all sorts of sadhana. There are three classes of sadhana : sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic. In the sattvic sadhana the devotee calls on the Lord with great longing or simply repeats His name ; he doesn't seek any result in return. The rajasic sadhana prescribes many rituals : purascharana, pilgrimages, panchatapa, worship with sixteen articles, and so forth. The tamasic sadhana is a worship of God with the help of tamas. The attitude of a tamasic devotee is this : ' Hail, Kali ! What ? Wilt Thou not reveal Thyself to me ? If not, I will cut my throat with a knife ! ' In this discipline one does not observe conventional purity : it is like some of the disciplines prescribed by the Tantra.

"During my sadhana period I had all kinds of amazing visions. I distinctly perceived the communion of Atman. A person exactly resembling me entered my body and began to commune with each one of the six lotuses.<sup>3</sup> The petals of these lotuses had been closed ; but as each of them experienced the communion, the drooping flower bloomed and turned itself upward. Thus blossomed forth the lotuses at the centres of Muladhara, Svadhisthana, Anahata, Visuddha, Ajna, and Sahasrara. The drooping flowers turned upward. I perceived all these things directly.

"When I meditated during my sadhana, I used to think of the unflickering flame of a lamp set in a windless place.

"In deep meditation a man is not at all conscious of the outer world. A hunter was aiming at a bird. A bridal procession passed along beside him, with the groom's relatives and friends, music, carriages, and horses. It took a long time for the procession to pass the hunter, but he was not at all conscious of it. He did not know that the bridegroom had gone by.

"A man was angling in a lake all by himself. After a long while the float began to move. Now and then its tip touched the water. The angler was holding the rod tight in his hands, ready to pull it up, when a passer-by stopped and said, ' Sir, can you tell me where Mr. Bannerji lives ? ' There was no reply from the angler, who was just on the point of pulling up the rod. Again and again the stranger said to him in a loud voice, ' Sir, can you tell me where Mr. Bannerji lives ? ' But the angler was unconscious of everything around him. His hands were trembling, his eyes fixed on the float. The stranger was annoyed and went on. When he had gone quite a way, the angler's float sank under water and with one pull of the rod he landed the fish. He wiped the sweat from his face with his towel and shouted after the stranger. ' Hey ! ' he said. ' Come here ! Listen ! ' But the man would not turn his face. After much shouting, however, he came back and said to the angler, ' Why are you shouting at me ? ' ' What did you ask me about ? ' said the angler. The stranger said, ' I repeated the question so many times, and now you are asking me to repeat it once more ! ' The angler replied, ' At that time my float was about to sink ; so I didn't hear a word of what you said.'

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the lotuses at the six centres, through which the Kundalini rises. See Glossary under Kundalini.

"A person can achieve such single-mindedness in meditation that he will see nothing, hear nothing. He will not be conscious even of touch. A snake may crawl over his body, but he will not know it. Neither of them will be aware of the other.

"In deep meditation the sense-organs stop functioning; the mind does not look outward. It is like closing the gate of the outer court in a house. There are five objects of the senses: form, taste, smell, touch, and sound. They are all left outside.

"At the beginning of meditation the objects of the senses appear before the aspirant. But when the meditation becomes deep, they no longer bother him. They are left outside. How many things I saw during meditation! I vividly perceived before me a heap of rupees, a shawl, a plate of sweets, and two women with rings in their noses. 'What do you want?' I asked my mind. 'Do you want to enjoy any of these things?' 'No,' replied the mind, 'I don't want any of them. I don't want anything but the Lotus Feet of God.' I saw the inside and the outside of the women, as one sees from outside the articles in a glass room. I saw what is in them: entrails, blood, filth, worms, phlegm, and such things."

Girish Chandra Ghosh used to say now and then that he could cure illness by the strength of the Master's name.

MASTER (to Girish and the other devotees): "People of small intellect seek occult powers—powers to cure disease, win a lawsuit, walk on water, and such things. But the genuine devotees of God don't want anything except His Lotus Feet. One day Hriday said to me, 'Uncle, please ask the Mother for some powers, some occult powers.' I have the nature of a child. While I was practising japa in the Kali temple, I said to Kali, 'Mother, Hriday asked me to pray to You for some occult powers.' The Divine Mother at once showed me a vision. A middle-aged prostitute, about forty years old, appeared and sat with her back to me. She had large hips and wore a black-bordered sari. Soon she was covered with filth. The Mother showed me that occult powers are as abominable as the filth of that prostitute. Thereupon I went to Hriday and scolded him, saying: 'Why did you teach me such a prayer? It is because of you that I had such an experience.'

"People with a little occult power gain such things as name and fame. Many of them want to follow the profession of guru, gain people's recognition, and make disciples and devotees. Men say of such a guru: 'Ah! He is having a wonderful time. How many people visit him! He has many disciples and followers. His house is overflowing with furniture and other things. People give him presents. He has such power that he can feed many people if he so desires.'

"The profession of a teacher is like that of a prostitute. It is the selling of oneself for the trifle of money, honour, and creature comforts. For such insignificant things it is not good to prostitute the body, mind, and soul, the means by which one can attain God. A man once said about a certain woman: 'Ah! She is having a grand time now. She is so well off! She has rented a room and furnished it with a couch, a mat, pillows, and many

other things. And how many people she controls ! They are always visiting her.' In other words, the woman has now become a prostitute. Therefore her happiness is unbounded. Formerly she was a maidservant in a gentleman's house ; now she is a prostitute. She has ruined herself for a mere trifle.

"How many other visions I saw while meditating during my sadhana ! Once I was meditating under the bel-tree when 'Sin' appeared before me and tempted me in various ways. He came to me in the form of an English soldier. He wanted to give me wealth, honour, sex pleasure, various occult powers, and such things. I began to pray to the Divine Mother. Now I am telling you something very secret. The Mother appeared. I said to Her, 'Kill him, Mother !' I still remember that form of the Mother, Her world-bewitching beauty. She came to me taking the form of Krishnamayi.<sup>3</sup> But it was as if her glance moved the world."

Sri Ramakrishna became silent. Resuming his reminiscences, he said : "How many other visions I saw ! But I am not permitted to tell them. Someone is shutting my mouth, as it were. I used to find no distinction between the sacred tulsi and the insignificant sajina leaf. The feeling of distinction was entirely destroyed. Once I was meditating under the banyan when I was shown a Mussalman<sup>4</sup> with a long beard. He came to me with rice in an earthen plate. He fed some other Mussalmans with the rice and also gave me a few grains to eat. The Mother showed me that there exists only One, and not two. It is Satchidananda alone that has taken all these various forms ; He alone has become the world and its living beings. Again, it is He who has become food.

(To Girish, M., and the others) "I have the nature of a child. Hriday said to me, 'Uncle, ask the Mother for some occult powers.' At once I went to the temple to ask Her about them. At that time God had put me in such a state that I had to listen to those who lived with me. I felt like a child who sees darkness all around unless someone is with him. I felt as if I should die unless Hriday was near me. You see I am in that state of mind just now. While I am speaking to you my inner spirit is being awakened."

As Sri Ramakrishna uttered these words, he was on the point of plunging into samadhi and losing consciousness of time and space. But he was trying with the utmost difficulty to control himself. He said to the devotees in an ecstatic mood : "I still see you. But I feel as if you had been sitting here for ever. I don't recall when you came or where you are."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent a few minutes. Then, regaining partial consciousness, he said, "I shall have a drink of water." He often said things like this after samadhi, in order to bring down his mind to the ordinary plane of consciousness. Girish was a new-comer and did not know this ; so he started to bring some water. Sri Ramakrishna asked him not to, saying, "No, my dear sir, I cannot drink now."

The Master and the devotees were silent awhile. Sri Ramakrishna resumed the conversation.

<sup>3</sup> The young daughter of Balaram Bose.

<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps a vision of Mohammed, the founder of Islam.

MASTER (to M.): "Well, have I done any wrong in telling these secret experiences?"

M. did not know what to say and kept quiet.

MASTER: "Why should there be any harm in it? I have told these things to create faith in you all."

After a while he said to M. very humbly, "Will you kindly bring him here?" He referred to Purna.

M. (*hesitating*): "Yes, sir. I shall send for him this very moment."

MASTER (*eagerly*): "In Purna I have reached the 'post'."

Was Sri Ramakrishna hinting that Purna was perhaps the last devotee of his inner circle?

Sri Ramakrishna then described to Girish, M., and the other devotees his own experience of mahabhava.

MASTER (to the devotees): "My joy after that experience was equal to the pain I suffered before it. Mahabhava is a divine ecstasy; it shakes the body and mind to their very foundation. It is like a huge elephant entering a small hut. The house shakes to its foundation. Perhaps it falls to pieces.

"The burning pain that one feels when one is separated from God is not an ordinary feeling. It is said that the fire of this anguish in Rupa and Sanatana<sup>5</sup> scorched the leaves of the tree under which they sat. I was unconscious three days in that state. I couldn't move. I lay in one place. When I regained consciousness, the Brahmani<sup>6</sup> took me out for a bath. Her hand couldn't bear the touch of my skin; so my body had to be covered with a heavy sheet. Only then could she hold me with her hand and lead me to the bathing-place. The earth that had stuck to my body while I was lying on the ground had become baked.

"In that state I felt as if a ploughshare were passing through my backbone. I cried out: 'Oh, I am dying! I am dying!' But afterwards I was filled with great joy."

The devotees listened breathlessly to these experiences of the Master.

MASTER (to Girish): "But it isn't necessary for you to go so far. My experiences are for others to refer to. You busy yourself with five different things, but I have one ideal only. I do not enjoy anything but God. This is what God has ordained for me. (*Smiling*) There are different trees in the forest, some shooting up with one trunk and others spreading out with five branches. (*All smile.*)

"Yes, my experiences are for others to refer to. But you should live in the world in a spirit of detachment. You will no doubt have dirt on your body, but you must shake it off as the mudfish shakes off the mud. You may swim in the black ocean of the world, but your body should not be stained."

GIRISH (*smiling*): "But you too had to marry." (*Laughter.*)

MASTER (*smiling*): "Marriage is necessary for the sake of samskara.<sup>7</sup> But how could I lead a worldly life? So uncontrollable was my divine fervour

<sup>5</sup> Two great disciples of Sri Chaitanya.

<sup>6</sup> A brahmin woman who was one of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual teachers.

<sup>7</sup> According to Hindu religious law, marriage is one of the ten samskaras, or purificatory rites, prescribed for the three higher castes, namely, the brahmin, kshatriya, and vaisya.



that every time the sacred thread was put around my neck it dropped off. Some believe that Sukadeva also had to marry—for the sake of samskara. They say he even had a daughter. (*All laugh.*)

"'Woman and gold' alone is the world. It makes one forget God."

GIRISH : "But how can we get rid of 'woman and gold'?"

MASTER : "Pray to God with a yearning heart. Pray to Him for discrimination. 'God alone is real and all else illusory'—this is discrimination. One strains water through a fine sieve in order to separate the dirt from it. The clear water goes through the sieve, leaving the dirt behind. Apply the sieve of discrimination to the world. Live in the world after knowing God. Then it will be the world of vidya.

"Just see the bewitching power of women! I mean the women who are the embodiment of avidya, the power of delusion. They fool men, as it were. They take away their inner substance. When I see a man and woman sitting together, I say to myself, 'Alas, they are done for!' (*Looking at M.*) Haru, such a nice boy, is possessed by a witch. People ask: 'Where is Haru? Where is he?' But where do you expect him to be? They all go to the banyan and find him sitting quietly under it. He no longer has his beauty, power, or joy. Ah! He is possessed by the witch that lives in the banyan.

"If a woman says to her husband, 'Go there', he at once stands up, ready to go. If she says, 'Sit down here', immediately he sits down.

"A job-seeker got tired of visiting the manager in an office. He couldn't get the job. The manager said to him, 'There is no vacancy now; but come and see me now and then.' This went on for a long time, and the candidate lost all hope. One day he told his tale of woe to a friend. The friend said: 'How stupid you are! Why are you wearing away the soles of your feet going to that fellow? You had better go to Golap. You will get the job tomorrow.' 'Is that so?' said the candidate. 'I am going right away.' Golap was the manager's mistress. The candidate called on her and said: 'Mother, I am in great distress. You must help me out of it. I am the son of a poor brahmin. Where else shall I go for help? Mother, I have been out of work many days. My children are about to starve to death. I can get a job if you but say the word.' Golap said to him, 'Child, whom should I speak to?' She said to herself: 'Ah, the poor brahmin! He has been suffering too much.' The candidate said to her, 'I am sure to get the job if you just put in a word about it to the manager.' Golap said, 'I shall speak to him today and settle the matter.' The very next morning a man called on the candidate and said, 'You are to work in the manager's office, beginning today.' The manager said to his English boss: 'This man is very competent. I have appointed him. He will do credit to the firm.'

"All are deluded by 'woman and gold'. But I do not care for it at all. And I swear to you that I do not know anything but God."

A DEVOTEE : "Sir, a new sect, named 'Nava Hullol', has been started. Lalit Chatterji is one of the members."

MASTER : "There are different views. All these views are but so many paths to reach the same goal. But everyone believes that his view alone is right, that his watch alone keeps correct time."

GIRISH (to M.): "Do you remember what Pope says about it ?

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own."

MASTER (to M.): "What does it mean ?"

M: "Everyone thinks that his own watch keeps the correct time. But different watches do not give the same time."

MASTER: "But however wrong the watches may be, the sun never makes a mistake. One should check one's watch with the sun."

A DEVOTEE: "Mr. X—tells lies."

MASTER: "Truthfulness in speech is the tapasya of the Kaliyuga. It is difficult to practise other austerities in the cycle. By adhering to truth one attains God. Tulsidas said: 'Truthfulness, obedience to God, and the regarding of others' wives as one's mother, are the greatest virtues. If one does not realize God by practising them, then Tulsi is a liar.'

"Keshab Sen assumed his father's debts. Others would have repudiated them. I visited Devendra's Samaj at Jorashanko and found Keshab meditating on the dais. He was then a young man. I said to Mathur Babu: 'Of all who are meditating here, this young man's "float" alone has sunk under water. The "fish" is biting at the hook.'

"There was a man—whom I shall not name—who for ten thousand rupees told a lie in court. In order to win the lawsuit he made me give an offering to the Divine Mother. He said to me, 'Father, please give this offering to the Mother.' Trusting him like a child, I gave the offering."

DEVOTEE: "A nice man indeed !"

MASTER: "But he had such faith in me that he believed the Mother would grant his prayer if I but made the offering."

Referring to Lalit Babu, Sri Ramakrishna said: "Is it an easy matter to get rid of pride ? There are very few who are without pride. Balaram is one of them. (Pointing to a devotee) And here is another. Other people in their position would have swelled with pride. They would have parted their hair and showed other traits of *tamas*. They would have been proud of their learning. The 'fat brahmin' [referring to Prankrishna] still has a little of it. (To M.) Mahima Chakravarty has read many books, hasn't he ?"

M: "Yes, sir, he has read a great deal."

MASTER (smiling): "I wish he and Girish could meet. Then we could enjoy a little discussion."

GIRISH (smiling): "Doesn't he say that by means of *sadhana* all people can be like Sri Krishna ?"

MASTER: "Not exactly that, but something like it."

DEVOTEE: "Sir, can all be like Sri Krishna ?"

MASTER: "An Incarnation of God or one born with some of the characteristics of an Incarnation is called an *Isvarakoti*. An ordinary man is called a *jiva* or *jivakoti*. By dint of *sadhana* a *jivakoti* can realize God ; but after *samadhi* he cannot come back to the plane of relative consciousness.

"The *Isvarakoti* is like the king's son. He has the keys to all the rooms of the seven-story palace ; he can climb to all the seven floors and come down

at will. A jivakoti is like a petty officer. He can enter some of the rooms of the palace ; that is his limit.

"Janaka was a jnani. He attained Knowledge by means of his sadhana. But Sukadeva was Knowledge itself."

GIRISH : " Ah ! "

MASTER : Sukadeva did not attain Knowledge through sadhana. Like Sukadeva, Narada also had the Knowledge of Brahman. But he retained bhakti in order to teach people. Prahlada sometimes assumed the attitude of 'I am He', sometimes of a servant of God, and sometimes that of His child. Hanuman also was like that.

"All may wish for such a lofty state, but all cannot attain it. Some bamboos are hollower than others ; some are more solid inside."

A DEVOTEE : " You say that your spiritual experiences are for others to refer to. Tell us what we should do."

MASTER : " If you want to realize God, then you must cultivate intense dispassion. You must renounce immediately what you feel to be standing in your way. You should not put it off till the future. 'Woman and gold' is the obstruction. The mind must be withdrawn from it.

"One must not be slow and lazy. A man was going to bathe ; he had his towel on his shoulder. His wife said to him : 'You are worthless. You are getting old and still you cannot give up some of your habits. You cannot live a single day without me. But look at that man ! What a renouncer he is !'

"HUSBAND : 'Why ? What has he done ?'

"WIFE : 'He has sixteen wives and he is renouncing them one by one. You will never be able to renounce.'

"HUSBAND : 'Renouncing his wives one by one ! You are crazy. He won't be able to renounce. If a man wants to renounce, does he do it little by little ?'

"WIFE (smiling) : 'Still he is better than you.'

"HUSBAND : 'You are silly ; you don't understand. He cannot renounce. But I can. See ! Here I go !'"

The Master continued : " That is called intense renunciation. No sooner did the man discriminate than he renounced. He went away with the towel on his shoulder. He didn't turn back to settle his worldly affairs. He didn't even look back at his home.

"He who wants to renounce needs great strength of mind. He must have a dare-devil attitude like a dacoit's. Before looting a house, the dacoits shout : 'Kill ! Murder ! Loot !'

"Cultivate devotion and love of God and so pass your days. What else can you do ? When Krishna went away, Yasoda became insane with grief and visited Radha. Radha was moved by her sorrow and appeared before her as Adyasakti. She said, 'My child, ask a boon of Me.' Yasoda replied : 'Mother, what else shall I ask of You ? Bless me that I may serve Krishna alone with my body, mind, and speech ; that I may behold His devotees with these eyes ; that I may go with these feet to the place where His divine sport is manifested ; that I may serve Him and His devotees with these hands ; and that I may devote all my sense-organs to His service alone.'"

As Sri Ramakrishna uttered these words, he was about to go into ecstasy. Suddenly he exclaimed : "Kali, the Embodiment of Destruction ! No, Nitya-Kali, my eternal Divine Mother !" With great difficulty he restrained himself. He was starting to say more about Yasoda, when Mahendra Mukherji arrived. Mahendra and his younger brother, Priya, had been visiting the Master for some time. Mahendra owned a flour-mill and other businesses. His brother was an engineer. Both the brothers engaged people to manage their affairs and therefore had considerable leisure. Mahendra was thirty-six or thirty-seven and his brother two years younger. Besides their country home at Kedeti, they had a house at Baghbazar, Calcutta. A young devotee named Hari accompanied them on their visits to Sri Ramakrishna. Hari was married but greatly devoted to the Master. Mahendra and Hari had not visited Dakshineswar for a long time. They saluted Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER : "Hello ! Why haven't you visited Dakshineswar for so long ?"

MAHENDRA : "Sir, I have been away from Calcutta. I was at Kedeti."

MASTER : "You have no children. You don't serve anybody. And still you have no leisure ! Goodness gracious !"

The devotees remained silent. Mahendra was a little embarrassed.

MASTER (to Mahendra) ! "Why am I saying all this to you ? You are sincere and generous. You have love for God."

MAHENDRA : "You are saying these words for my good."

MASTER (smiling) : "You see, we don't take any collection during the performance at our place. Jadu's mother says to me, 'Other sadhus always ask for money, but you do not.' Worldly people feel annoyed if they have to spend money."

"A theatrical performance was being given at a certain place. A man felt a great desire to take a seat and see it. He peeped in and saw that a collection was being taken from the audience. Quietly he slipped away. Another performance was being given at some other place. He went there and, inquiring, found that no collection would be taken. There was a great rush of people. He elbowed his way through the crowd and reached the centre of the hall. There he picked out a nice seat for himself, twirled his moustaches, and sat through the performance. (All laugh.)"

"You have no children to divert your mind. I know a deputy magistrate who draws a salary of eight hundred rupees a month. He went to Keshab's house to see a performance. I was there too. Rakhal and a few other devotees were with me and sat beside me. After a while Rakhal went out for a few minutes. The deputy magistrate came over and made his young son take Rakhal's seat. I said, 'He can't sit there.' At that time I was in such a state of mind that I had to do whatever the person next to me would ask me to do ; so I had seated Rakhal beside me. As long as the performance lasted the deputy did nothing but gibber with his son. The rascal didn't look at the performance even once. I heard, too, that he is a slave to his wife ; he gets up and sits down as she tells him to. And he didn't see the performance for that snub-nosed monkey of a boy. . . ."

(To Mahendra) "Do you practise meditation ?"





MAHENDRA : " Yes, sir. A little."

MASTER : " Come to Dakshineswar now and then."

MAHENDRA (*smiling*) : " Yes, sir. I will. You know where my knots and twists are. You will straighten them out."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " First come to Dakshineswar; then I shall press your limbs to see where your twists are. Why don't you come ?"

MAHENDRA : " Because of the pressure of my duties. Besides, I have to go to my country home now and then."

MASTER (*to Mahendra, pointing his finger at the devotees*) : " Have they no homes or dwelling-places ? Have they no duties ? How is it that they come ?"

(*To Hari*) " Why haven't you come to Dakshineswar ? Is your wife living with you ?"

HARI : " No, sir."

MASTER : " Then why did you forget me ?"

HARI : " I haven't been well, sir."

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " He looks thin. He has no small measure of bhakti. He is overflowing with it, but it is of a rather troublesome nature." (*Laughter.*)

Sri Ramakrishna used to address a certain devotee's wife by the name of " Habi's mother ". Her brother, a college student aged about twenty, was there. He stood up, ready to go and play cricket. His younger brother, named Dwija, was also a devotee of the Master. Both brothers left the room. A few minutes later Dwija returned. The Master said, " Why didn't you go ?" A devotee answered : " He wants to hear the music. Perhaps that is why he has come back."

Trailokya, the Brahmo devotee, was to sing for the Master. Paltu arrived. The Master said : " Who is this ? Ah ! It is Paltu."

Purna, another young devotee, also arrived. It was with great difficulty that Sri Ramakrishna had managed to have him come. His relatives strongly objected to his visiting the Master. Purna was a student in the fifth grade of the school where M. taught. The boy prostrated himself before Sri Ramakrishna. The Master seated him by his side and was talking to him in a low voice. M. alone was sitting near them. The other devotees were talking about various things. Girish, sitting on the other side of the room, was reading a life of Keshab.

MASTER (*to Purna*) : " Come nearer."

GIRISH (*to M.*) : " Who is this boy ?"

M. was afraid that others might notice the boy. This would make trouble for him at home and M. would be responsible for it.

M. (*sharply*) : " Don't you see he is a boy ?"

GIRISH (*smiling*) : " I need no ghost to tell me that."

The Master and the boy were talking in low tones.

MASTER : " Do you practise what I asked you to ?"

PURNA : " Yes, sir."

MASTER : " Do you dream ? Do you dream of a flame ? A lighted torch ? A married woman ? A cremation ground ? It is good to dream of these things."



PURNA : " I dreamt of you. You were seated and were telling me something."

MASTER : " What ? Some instructions ? Tell me some of it."

PURNA : " I don't remember now."

MASTER : " Never mind. But it is very good. You will make progress. You feel attracted to me, don't you ?"

A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna said to the boy, " Won't you come there ?" He meant Dakshineswar. " I can't promise ", answered the boy.

MASTER : " Why ? Doesn't one of your relatives live there ?"

PURNA : " Yes, sir. But it won't be very convenient for me to go."

Girish was reading a life of Keshab written by Trailokya of the Brahmo Samaj. In it Trailokya said that at first Sri Ramakrishna had been very much opposed to the world but that after meeting Keshab he had changed his mind and had come to believe that one could lead a spiritual life in the world as well. Several devotees had told the Master about this. They wanted to discuss it with Trailokya. Those passages in the book had been read to the Master.

Noticing the book in Girish's hand, Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish, M., Ram, and the other devotees : " Those people are busy with the world. That is why they set such a high value on worldly life. They are drowned in 'woman and gold'. One doesn't talk that way after realizing God. After enjoying divine bliss, one looks on the world as crow-droppings. At the very outset I utterly renounced everything. Not only did I renounce the company of worldly people, but now and then the company of devotees as well. I noticed that the devotees were dropping dead one by one, and that made my heart writhe with pain. But now I keep one or two of them with me."

Girish left for home, saying he would come back.

Trailokya arrived with Jaygopal Sen. They bowed before the Master and sat down. He inquired about their health. The younger Naren entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to him, " Why didn't you see me last Saturday ?"

Trailokya was ready to sing.

MASTER : " Ah ! You sang that day about the Blissful Mother. How sweetly you sang ! Others' songs seem insipid to me. That day I didn't enjoy even Narendra's singing. Why don't you sing those same songs again ?"

Trailokya sang :

?

Victory to Gora, Sachi's son !  
Hail, Abode of every virtue,  
Touchstone of Love, Ocean of Bliss,  
Man's bewitcher, beauteous of form,  
Enchanting the eye like shining gold !  
His tender arms that reach to the knee,  
Graceful and long as lotus stalks,  
Are lovingly stretched to all mankind ;  
His lotus face of matchless beauty  
Overflows with the nectar of Love ;  
His cheeks are covered with curling hair !

Alight with heavenly love, his beauty  
 Charms the eye ! Beaming with fervour,  
 Radiant with Bliss, his body trembling  
 With Hari's joy, Gauranga the golden  
 Dances like a mad elephant, shaking  
 In all his limbs with the frenzy of love !  
 Gauranga, singer of Hari's glories,  
 Prize of every sadhu's heart,  
 Rarest of men, the Ocean of Love,  
 Embraces the outcaste, calls him brother,  
 Takes him in his arms in fervent love !

He dances with both his arms upraised,  
 And sings Hari's name ; the tears are streaming  
 Down his cheeks ; he weeps, he cries,  
 He trembles, roars, and rages, saying,  
 " Where is Hari, the Jewel of my heart ?"  
 The hair on his limbs is standing on end ;  
 Like a kadamba flower is his body ;  
 Covered with dust he rolls on the ground.  
 O Thou, the Abode of Hari's lila,  
 Fountain-head of Love's elixir,  
 Friend of the helpless, Glory of Banga,  
 Hail Chaitanya, Thou who shinest  
 Bright as the moon, in the bhakta's heart !

Sri Ramakrishna left the room for a minute. The women devotees were seated near the screen. They were eager to see Sri Ramakrishna. Trailokya went on with his music.

Sri Ramakrishna entered the room again and said to Trailokya, " Please sing a little about the Blissful Mother."

Trailokya sang :

O Mother, how deep is Thy love for men !  
 Mindful of it, I weep for joy. . . .

Listening to the song, the younger Naren went into deep meditation. He remained as still as a log. Sri Ramakrishna said to M.: " Look at him. He is totally unaware of the outer world."

The song was over. At Sri Ramakrishna's request, Trailokya sang :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !  
 What need have I of knowledge or reason ? . . .

Ram asked him to sing about Hari.

Trailokya sang :

Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,  
 Sing aloud the name of Hari,  
 Praise Lord Hari's name !  
 And praising Hari's name, O mind,  
 Cross the ocean of this world.

Hari dwells in earth, in water,  
 Hari dwells in fire and air ;

In sun and moon He dwells.  
 Hari's ever living presence  
 Fills the boundless universe.

M. said in a low voice to Trailokya, "Please—'Gaur and Nitai, ye blessed brothers'."

Sri Ramakrishna, too, asked him to sing the song. Trailokya and the devotees sang it in chorus, the Master joining them. When it was over, the Master sang :

Behold, the two brothers<sup>3</sup> have come, who weep while chanting  
 Hari's name,  
 The brothers who, in return for blows, offer to sinners Hari's love,  
 Embracing everyone as brother, even the outcaste shunned by men.  
 Behold, the two brothers have come, who once were Kanai and  
 Balai of Braja. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna sang again :

See how all Nadia is shaking  
 Under the waves of Gauranga's love ! . . .

Then :

Who are they that walk along, chanting Hari's Name ?  
 O Madhai, go out and see !  
 They seem to be Gaur and Nitai,  
 With golden anklets on their lovely feet ;  
 Shaven of head and clad in rags,  
 They reel like madmen as they go. . . .

The younger Naren was about to leave.

MASTER : "Show great devotion to your parents ; but don't obey them if they stand in your way to God. You must gird your loins with great determination and say, 'This rogue of a father !'"

NAREN : "Truly, I have no fear."

Girish arrived. Sri Ramakrishna introduced him to Trailokya. He asked them to talk to each other. A few minutes later the Master said, "That song again, please."

Trailokya sang :

Victory to Gora, Sachi's son !  
 Hail, Abode of every virtue,  
 Touchstone of Love, Ocean of Bliss,  
 Man's bewitcher, beauteous of form,  
 Enchanting the eye like shining gold ! . . .

Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. He stood up, totally unconscious of the world.

Regaining partial consciousness, he begged Trailokya to sing "Oh, what a vision I have beheld".

Trailokya sang :

Oh, what a vision I have beheld in Keshab Bharati's<sup>5</sup> hut !  
 Gora, in all his matchless grace

<sup>3</sup> Gauranga and Nityananda.

<sup>5</sup> The monastic teacher Sri Chaitanya.

Shedding tears in a thousand streams !  
Like a mad elephant  
He dances in ecstasy and sings,  
Drunk with an overwhelming love.

Rolling flat upon the ground and swimming in his tears,  
He weeps and shouts Lord Hari's name,  
Piercing the very heavens with his cries,  
Loud as a lion's roar ;  
Then most humbly he begs men's love,  
To feel himself the servant of God.

Shorn of his locks, he has put on the yogi's ochre robe ;  
Even the hardest heart must melt  
To see his pure and heavenly love.  
Smitten with man's deep woe,  
He has abandoned everything  
And pours out love unstintingly.

Oh, would that Premdas were his slave and, passing from door  
to door,  
Might sing Gauranga's endless praise !

The music was over. It was about dusk. Sri Ramakrishna was surrounded by the devotees.

MASTER (*to Ram*) : " There were no instruments to accompany the songs. The singing creates an atmosphere when there is proper accompaniment. (*Smiling*) Do you know how Balaram manages a festival ? He is like a miserly brahmin raising a cow. The cow must eat very little but give milk in torrents. (*All laugh.*) Sing your own songs and beat your own drums : that's Balaram's idea ! " (*All laugh*).

As evening came on, lamps were lighted in the drawing-room and on the verandah. Sri Ramakrishna bowed to the Divine Mother and began to chant the name of God. The devotees sat around and listened to his sweet chanting. They wanted to discuss with Trailokya his remarks about the Master's change of opinion on worldly life. Girish started the discussion.

GIRISH (*to Trailokya*) : " You have written that, after coming in contact with Keshab, Sri Ramakrishna changed his views about worldly life ; but it isn't true."

MASTER (*to Trailokya and the other devotees*) : " If a man enjoys the Bliss of God, he doesn't enjoy the world. Having tasted divine bliss, he finds the world insipid. If a man gets a shawl, he doesn't care for broadcloth."

TRAILOKYA : " I referred to those who wanted to lead a worldly life. I didn't mean renouncers."

MASTER : " What are you talking about ? People talk about leading a religious life in the world. But if they once taste the bliss of God they will not enjoy anything else. Their attachment to worldly duties declines. As their spiritual joy becomes deeper, they simply cannot perform their worldly duties. More and more they seek that joy. Can worldly pleasures and sex pleasures be compared to the bliss of God ? If a man once tastes that bliss, he runs

after it ever afterwards. It matters very little to him then whether the world remains or disappears.

"Though the chatak bird is about to die of a parched throat, and around it there are seven oceans, rivers, and lakes overflowing with water, still it will not touch that water. Its throat is cracking with thirst, and still it will not drink that water. It looks up, mouth agape, for the rain to fall when the star Svati is in the ascendant. 'To the chatak bird all waters are mere dryness beside Svati water.'

"People say they will hold to both God and the world. After drinking an ounce of wine, a man may be pleasantly intoxicated and also conscious of the world; but can he be both when he has drunk a great deal more?

"After the bliss of God nothing else tastes good. Then talk about 'woman and gold' stabs the heart, as it were. (*Intoning*) 'I cannot enjoy the talk of worldly people.' When a man becomes mad for God, he doesn't enjoy money or such things."

TRAILOKYA: "But, sir, if a man is to remain in the world, he needs money and he must also save. He has to give in charity and—"

MASTER: "What? Do you mean that one must first save money and then seek God? And you talk about charity and kindness! A worldly man spends thousands of rupees for his daughter's marriage. Yet all the while, his neighbours are dying of starvation; and he finds it hard to give them two morsels of rice; he calculates a thousand times before giving them even that much. The people around him have nothing to eat; but what does he care about that? He says to himself: 'What can I do? Let the rascals live or die. All I care about is that the members of my family should live well.' And they talk about doing good to others!"

TRAILOKYA: "But, sir, there are good people in the world as well. Take the case of Pundarika Vidyānidhī, the devotee of Chaitanya. He lived in the world."

MASTER: "He had drunk wine up to his neck. If he had drunk a little more, he couldn't have led a worldly life."

Trailokya remained silent. M. said aside to Girish, "Then what he has written is not true."

GIRISH (*to Trailokya*): "Then what you have written is not true."

TRAILOKYA: "Why so? Doesn't he [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] admit that a man can lead a spiritual life in the world?"

MASTER: "Yes, he can. But such a man should first of all attain Knowledge and then live in the world. First he should realize God. Then 'he can swim in a sea of slander and not be stained.' After realizing God, a man can live in the world like a mudfish. The world he lives in after attaining God is the world of vidyā. In it he sees neither woman nor gold. He finds there only devotion, devotee, and God. You see, I too have a wife, and a few pots and pans in my room; I too feed a few vagabonds; I too worry about the devotees—Habi's mother for instance—when they come here."

A DEVOTEE (*to Trailokya*): "I have read in your book that you do not believe in the Incarnation of God. You said so in connection with Chaitanya."



TRAILOKYA : "Why, Chaitanya himself protested against the idea of Divine Incarnation. Once, in Puri, Advaita and the other devotees sang a song to the effect that Chaitanya was God. At this Chaitanya shut the door of his room. Infinite are the glories of God. As he [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] says, the devotee is the parlour of God. Suppose a parlour is very well furnished ; does that mean that the master of the house has exhausted all his power and splendour in that one parlour ?"

GIRISH : "He [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] says that prema alone is the essence of God ; we need the man through whom this ecstatic love of God flows. He says that the milk of the cow flows through the udder ; we need the udder ; we do not care for the other parts of the cow--the legs, tail, or horns."

TRAILOKYA : "The milk of God's prema flows through an infinite number of channels. God has infinite powers."

GIRISH : "But what other power can stand before prema ?"

TRAILOKYA : "It is possible if He who has the power wants it. Everything is in God's power."

GIRISH : "Yes, I admit that. But there is also a thing called the power of avidya."

TRAILOKYA : "Is avidya a thing ? Does there exist a substance called avidya ? It is only a negation, as darkness is the negation of light. There is no doubt that we prize prema most : what is a drop to God is an ocean to us. But if you say that prema is the last word about God, then you limit God Himself."

MASTER (to Trailokya and the other devotees) : "Yes, yes, that is true. But an ounce of wine makes me drunk. What need have I to count the gallons of wine in the tavern ? What need have we to know about the infinite powers of God ?"

GIRISH (to Trailokya) : "Do you believe in the Incarnation of God ?"

TRAILOKYA : "God incarnates Himself through His devotees alone. There cannot be a manifestation of infinite powers. It simply isn't possible. It is impossible for any man to manifest infinite powers."

GIRISH : "You can serve your children as 'Brahma Gopala'.<sup>10</sup> Then why isn't it possible to worship a great soul as God ?"

MASTER (to Trailokya) : "Why all this bother about infinity ? If I want to touch you, must I touch your entire body ? If you want to bathe in the Ganges, must you touch the whole river from Hardwar down to the ocean ?

"All troubles come to an end when the ego dies.' As long as a trace of 'I-consciousness' remains, one is conscious of difference. Nobody knows what remains after the 'I' disappears. Nobody can express it in words. That which is remains. After the 'I' disappears one cannot say that a part manifests through this man and the rest through another. Satchidananda is the ocean. The pot of 'I' is immersed in it. As long as the pot exists, the water seems to be divided into two parts : one part inside the pot and the other part outside it. But when the pot is broken there is only one stretch of water. One cannot even say that. Who would say that ?"

<sup>10</sup> A man of God.

After the discussion Sri Ramakrishna became engaged in pleasant conversation with Trailokya.

MASTER : " You are happy. Isn't that so ? "

TRAILOKYA : " But I shall become my old self again as soon as I leave this place. Here I feel very much the awakening of spiritual consciousness. "

MASTER : " You don't have to be afraid of walking on thorns if you are wearing shoes. You needn't be afraid of ' woman and gold ' if you know that God alone is real and all else illusory. "

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. Balaram took Trailokya to another room and gave him refreshments. Sri Ramakrishna began to tell the devotees about Trailokya and people of his views.

MASTER (to Girish, M., and the other devotees) : " Do you know what these people are like ? They are like a frog living in a well, who has never seen the outside world. He knows only his well ; so he will not believe that there is such a thing as the world. Likewise, people talk so much about the world because they have not known the joy of God. "

(To Girish) " Why do you argue with them so much ? They busy themselves with both—the world and God. One cannot understand the joy of God unless one has tasted it. Can anybody explain sex pleasure to a five-year-old boy ? Worldly people talk about God only from hearsay. Children, hearing their old aunts quarrelling among themselves, learn to say, ' There is my God ', ' I swear by God. '

" But that doesn't matter. I don't blame such people. Can all comprehend the Indivisible Satchidananda ? Only twelve rishis could recognize Ramachandra. All cannot recognize an Incarnation of God. Some take him for an ordinary man, some for a holy person, and only a few recognize him as an Incarnation. "

" One offers a price for an article according to one's capital. A rich man said to his servant : ' Take this diamond to the market and let me know how different people price it. Take it, first of all, to the egg-plant seller '. The servant took the diamond to the egg-plant seller. He examined it, turning it over in the palm of his hand, and said, ' Brother, I can give nine seers of egg-plants for it. ', ' Friend, ' said the servant, ' a little more—say, ten seers. ' The egg-plant seller replied : ' No, I have already quoted above the market price. You may give it to me if that price suits you. ' The servant laughed. He went back to his master and said : ' Sir, he would give me only nine seers of egg-plants and not one more. He said he had offered more than the market price. ' The master smiled and said : ' Now take it to the cloth-dealer. The other man deals only in egg-plants. What does he know about a diamond ? The cloth-dealer has a little more capital. Let us see how much he offers for it. ' The servant went to the cloth-dealer and said : ' Will you buy this ? How much will you pay for it ? ' The merchant said : ' Yes, it is a good thing. I can make a nice ornament out of it. I will give you nine hundred rupees for it. ' ' Brother, ' said the servant, ' offer a little more and I will sell it to you. Give me at least a thousand rupees. ' The cloth-dealer said : ' Friend, don't press me for more. I have offered more than the market price. I cannot give

a rupee more. Suit yourself.' Laughing, the servant returned to his master and said: 'He won't give a rupee more than nine hundred. He too said he had quoted above the market price.' The master said with a laugh: 'Now take it to a jeweller. Let us see what he has to say.' The servant went to a jeweller. The jeweller glanced at the diamond and said at once, 'I will give you one hundred thousand rupees for it.'

"They talk of practising religion in the world. Suppose a man is shut up in a room. All the doors and windows are closed. Only a little light comes through a hole in the ceiling. Can he see the sun with that roof over his head? And what will he do with only one ray of light? 'Woman and gold' is the roof. Can he see the sun unless he removes the roof? Worldly people are shut up in a room, as it were.

"The Incarnations of God belong to the class of the *Isvarakotis*. They roam about in the open spaces. They are never imprisoned in the world, never entangled by it. Their ego is not the 'thick ego' of worldly people. The ego, the 'I-consciousness', of worldly people is like four walls and a roof: the man inside them cannot see anything outside. The ego of the Incarnations and other *Isvarakotis* is a 'thin ego': through it they have an uninterrupted vision of God. Take the case of a man who stands by a wall on both sides of which there are meadows stretching to infinity. If there is a hole in the wall, through it he can see everything on the other side. If the hole is a big one he can even pass through it. The ego of the Incarnations and other *Isvarakotis* is like the wall with a hole. Though they remain on this side of the wall, still they can see the endless meadow on the other side. That is to say, though they have a human body, they are always united with God. Again, if they will, they can pass through the big hole to the other side and remain in *samadhi*. And if the hole is big enough, they can go through it and come back again. That is to say, though established in *samadhi*, they can again descend to the worldly plane."

The devotees listened breathlessly to these words about the mystery of Divine Incarnation.

## XL

### THE MASTER AT THE HOUSES OF BALARAM AND GIRISH

Friday, April 24, 1885

**A**BOUT ONE O'CLOCK in the afternoon M. arrived at Balaram's house in Calcutta and found the Master asleep in the drawing-room, one or two devotees resting near him. M. began to fan the Master gently. A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna woke up and sat on the bed with his clothes in a rather untidy condition. M. saluted him and took the dust of his feet.

MASTER (*tenderly to M.*): "Are you well? I'm feeling rather uneasy. I have a sore<sup>1</sup> in my throat. I suffer very much during the early hours of the morning. Can you tell me how I may be cured? (*In a worried tone*) They served pickled mango with the meal. I ate a little of it.

"How is your wife? I noticed the other day that she was looking rather sickly. Give her soothing drinks to keep her nerves cool."

M: "Green coconut milk, sir?"

MASTER: "Yes. A drink made of sugar candy is also good."

M: "Since last Sunday I have been living at our house with my parents."

MASTER: "You have done well. It will be convenient for you to live at home. Since your parents live there, you won't have to worry so much about the family."

While Sri Ramakrishna was talking, his mouth became dry. He said to M., like a child: "I feel a dryness in my mouth. Do you all feel that way?"

M. (*to Jogin*): "Is your mouth<sup>2</sup> also drying up?"

JOGIN: "No. Perhaps it is due to the heat."

Jogindra of Ariadaha was an intimate disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and later, after the passing away of the Master, renounced the world.

Sri Ramakrishna's clothes were still untidy. Some of the devotees smiled.

MASTER: "I look like a mother nursing her babies. (*All laugh.*) Well, my tongue is drying up. Shall I eat a pear or a jamrul?"<sup>3</sup>

BABURAM: "Let me get a jamrul for you."

MASTER: "You don't have to go out in this sun."

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of his cancer of the throat.

<sup>2</sup> A kind of juicy fruit.

M. was still fanning the Master.

MASTER : " You may stop now. You have been fanning a long time."

M : " I am not tired, sir."

MASTER (*tenderly*) : " No ?"

M. taught in a school in the neighbourhood. He had a little recess at one o'clock, during which he visited Sri Ramakrishna. It was time for him to go back to the school. He saluted the Master.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " Must you go now ?"

A DEVOTEE : " School is not over yet. He came here during recess."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " He is like a mother with seven or eight children. Day and night she is busy with her worldly duties. But now and then she makes time to serve her husband."

M.'s school closed at four o'clock. He came back to Balaram's house and found the Master sitting in the drawing-room. The devotees were arriving one by one. The younger Naren and Ram came. Narendra, too, was there. M. saluted the Master and took a seat. The ladies sent a plate of halua for Sri Ramakrishna. Because of the sore in his throat he could not eat any hard food.

MASTER (*to Narendra*) : " Ah ! This is nice stuff ! Eat some ! It is good ! Eat some !" (*All laugh.*)

Dusk was coming on. Sri Ramakrishna was about to go to the house of Girish, who had arranged a festival to celebrate the Master's coming. The Master came down from the second floor of Balaram's house with M. and a few other devotees. Near the gate he saw a beggar chanting the name of Rama, and he stood still. He fell into a meditative mood and remained standing a few minutes. He said to M., " He sings well." A devotee gave the beggar four pice.

Sri Ramakrishna entered Bosepara Lane. Laughing, he said to M. : " What are these people saying ? ' There comes Paramahansa's battalion ! ' What these fools say !" (*All laugh.*)

Sri Ramakrishna entered Girish's house. The latter had invited a large number of devotees to join the festival. Many of them were present. They all stood up to receive the Master, who, smiling, took his seat. The devotees sat around him. Among them were Girish, Mahimacharan, Ram, and Bhavanath, and also Baburam, Narendra, Jogin, the younger Naren, Chuni, Balaram, M., and the other devotees who had accompanied the Master from Balaram's house.

MASTER (*to Mahimacharan*) : " I said to Girish about you, ' There is one —very deep. You are only knee-deep.' Now you must help me check up on what I said. I want to see you two argue. But don't compromise." (*All laugh.*)

Girish and Mahimacharan started their discussion. Soon Ram said : Let them stop. Let us have some kirtan."

MASTER (*to Ram*) : " No, no ! This has a great deal of meaning. They are ' Englishmen '. I want to hear what they say."

Mahimacharan contended that all could become Krishna by means of sadhana. Girish said that Sri Krishna was an Incarnation of God. However much a man practised sadhana, he could never be an Incarnation.



MAHIMA : " Do you know what I mean ? Let me give an illustration. The bel-tree can become a mango-tree if only the obstructions are removed. It can be done by the practice of yoga."

GIRISH : " You may say whatever you like, but it cannot be done either by the practice of yoga or by anything else. Only a Krishna can become Krishna. If anybody has all the attributes of another person, Radha for instance, then he is none other than that person—Radha herself. If I see in a person all the attributes of Krishna, then I shall conclude that I am seeing Krishna Himself."

Mahimacharan could not argue well. At last he had to accept Girish's views.

MAHIMA (*to Girish*) : " Yes, sir, both views are right. God has willed the path of knowledge. He has also willed the path of bhakti. (*Pointing to Sri Ramakrishna*) As he says, by different paths people ultimately reach one and the same goal."

MASTER (*aside to Mahima*) : " You see, what I said was right, wasn't it ?"

MAHIMA : " Yes, sir. As you say, both paths are right."

MASTER (*pointing to Girish*) : " Haven't you noticed how deep his faith is ? He forgot to eat his refreshments. Like a dog, he would have torn your throat if you hadn't accepted his view. But we have enjoyed the discussion. You two have known each other and I myself have learnt many things."

The musician arrived with his party and sat in the middle of the room. He was waiting for a sign from Sri Ramakrishna to begin the kirtan. The Master gave his permission.

RAM (*to the Master*) : " Please tell them what to sing."

MASTER : " What shall I suggest ? (*After a little reflection*) Well, let them sing the prelude to the union of Radha and Krishna."

The musician sang :

My Gora, my treasure, the jewel among men,  
Weeps as he chants Sri Radha's name  
And rolls on the ground ; with fervent love  
He chants her name again and again.  
The tears stream from his love-filled eyes ;  
Once more he rolls upon the ground,  
As chanting her name he faints away.  
The hair on his body stands on end ;  
His tongue can lisp but a single word.  
Says Basu :<sup>1</sup> Why is Gora so restless ?

The kirtan continued.

Radha had met Krishna on the bank of the Jamuna under the kadamba tree. Her companions describe her physical and mental condition :

A hundred times each hour, in and out of the room she goes ;  
Restless, breathing hard, she looks toward the kadamba grove.  
Is she afraid of the elders ? Has she been possessed by a ghost ?  
Filled with restlessness, she cannot keep her dress arranged ;  
Her jewels have fallen off ; she trembles every now and then.

<sup>1</sup> The author of the song.

Alas, she is so young ! A princess born, and a wife besides !  
 What is it that she craves ? We do not understand her mind ;  
 But we can guess her hand is reaching out to catch the moon.  
 Humbly says Chandidas : ' Radha has fallen in Krishna's trap.

The kirtan went on.

Radha's friends say to her :

Tell us, O Radha of comely face ! Tell us what it is that ails you.  
 Why has your mind wandered away ? Why do you claw the earth  
 in frenzy ?  
 Tell us why your golden skin has taken the ashy hue of cinders.  
 From your body the scarlet cloth has dropped unheeded to the  
 ground ;  
 Ah ! Your eyes are red with tears ; your lovely lotus face has  
 withered.  
 Tell us what it is that ails you, lest our hearts should break with grief.

Radha says to her friends :

I long for the sight of Krishna's face.

The musician sang again.

Hearing Krishna's flute, Radha has gone mad. She says to her friends :

Who is the Sorcerer that dwells in the kadamba grove ?  
 His flute-notes suddenly enter my ears and strike a chord in my  
 heart ;  
 Piercing my very soul, they slay my dharma and drive me mad.  
 With restless mind and streaming eyes, alas ! I can scarcely breathe ;  
 How He plays His magic flute, whose music thrills my soul !  
 Because He is out of my sight, my heart expires ; I cannot stay  
 home.  
 My soul yearns for Him ; racked with pain, it longs to see Him once  
 more.  
 Says Uddhava Das : But you will die, O Radha, when you behold  
 Him !

The music continued.

Radha's heart yearns for the vision of Krishna. She says to her friends :

First I heard His magic flute from the kadamba grove,  
 And the next day the minstrel told me of Him and thrilled my soul ;  
 Another day, O friend of my heart, you chanted His blessed name.  
 (Ah, the blessed name of Krishna, full of honeyed sweetness !)  
 The wise men, too, described to me His virtues without number.  
 I am a weak and simple girl, and stern, alas ! are my elders ;  
 My love for my Beloved grows ; how can I live any longer ?  
 After reflecting long, I find that I must die at last ;  
 Can you not tell me a way, O friend, by which I may meet my  
 Krishna ?

As Sri Ramakrishna heard the line, " Ah, the blessed name of Krishna,  
 full of honeyed sweetness ! ", he could not remain seated any longer. He stood  
 up in a state of unconsciousness and went into deep samadhi. The younger  
 Naren stood at his right. Regaining partial consciousness, the Master repeated

\* The author of the song.

the name of Krishna in his melodious voice. Tears flowed down his cheeks. He sat down again. The musician continued his singing.

Visakha, a friend of Radha, runs out and brings a portrait of Krishna. She holds it before Radha's eyes. Radha says : " I see the picture of Him whom I beheld on the Jamuna's bank. Ever since then I have been in this plight,

I see the picture of Him whom I beheld on the Jamuna's bank ;  
The name Visakha spoke is the name of Him who is painted here,  
He who played on the flute is the Beloved of my soul ;  
His virtues the minstrel sang to me ; He has bewitched my heart.  
It is none other than He ! " So saying, Radha falls in a swoon.  
Restored to her senses by her friends, at once she says to them,  
" Show me Him, O friends, whom I saw reflected in my soul."  
And they promise her that they will.

Now Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra and the other devotees began to sing the kirtan in a loud voice. They sang :

Behold, the two brothers have come, who weep while chanting  
Hari's name. . . .

They continued :

See how all Nadia is shaking  
Under the waves of Gauranga's love. . . .

Again Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. After regaining consciousness of the outer world, he returned to his seat. Turning to M., he said, " I don't remember which way I was facing before." Then he began to talk to the devotees.

NARENDRA (*to the Master*) : " Hazra has now become a good man."

MASTER : " You don't know. There are people who repeat Rama's name with their tongues but hide stones under their arms to throw at others."

NARENDRA : " I don't agree with you, sir. I asked him about the things people complain of. He denied them."

MASTER : " He is steadfast in his devotions. He practises japa a little. But he also behaves in a queer way. He doesn't pay the coachman his fare."

NARENDRA : " That isn't true, sir. He said he had paid it."

MASTER : " Where did he get the money ?"

NARENDRA : " From Ramlal or someone else."

MASTER : " Did you ask him all these things in detail ? Once I prayed to the Divine Mother, ' O Mother, if Hazra is a hypocrite then please remove him from here.' Later on I told him of my prayer. After a few days he came to me and said, ' You see, I am still here.' (*The Master and the others laugh.*) But soon afterwards he left.

" Hazra's mother begged me through Ramlal to ask Hazra to come home. She was almost blind with weeping. I tried in various ways to persuade him to visit her. I said : ' Your mother is old. Go and see her once.' I couldn't make him go. Afterwards the poor mother died weeping for him."

NARENDRA : " This time he will go home."

MASTER : " Yes, yes ! He will go home ! He is a rogue. He is a rascal. You don't understand him. You are a fool. Gopal said that Hazra stayed at Sinthi a few days. People used to supply him with butter, rice, and other food. He had the impudence to tell them he couldn't swallow such coarse rice and bad butter. Ishan of Bhatpara accompanied him there. He ordered Ishan to carry water for him. That made the other brahmins very angry."

NARENDRA : " I asked him about that too. He said that Ishan Babu had himself come forward with the water. Besides, many brahmins of Bhatpara showed him respect."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " That was the result of his japa and austerity. You see, physical traits to a great extent influence character. Short stature and a body with dents here and there are not good traits. People with such traits take a long time to acquire spiritual knowledge."

BHAVANATH : " Let us stop talking about these things."

MASTER : " Don't misunderstand me. (*To Narendra*) You say you understand people ; that is why I am telling you all this. Do you know how I look on people like Hazra ? I know that just as God takes the form of holy men, so He also takes the form of cheats and rogues. (*To Mahimacharan*) What do you say ? All are God."

MAHIMA : " Yes, sir. All are God."

GIRISH (*to the Master*) : " Sir, what is *ekangi prema* ?"

MASTER : " It means one-sided love. For instance, the water does not seek the duck, but the duck loves water. There are other kinds of love : *sadharani*, *samanjasa*, and *samartha*. In the first, which is ordinary love, the lover seeks his own happiness ; he doesn't care whether the other person is happy or not. That was Chandravali's attitude towards Krishna. In the second, which is a compromise, both seek each other's happiness. This is a noble kind of love. But the third is the highest of all. Such a lover says to his beloved, ' Be happy yourself, whatever may happen to me.' Radha had this highest love. She was happy in Krishna's happiness. The gopis, too, had attained this exalted state.

" Do you know who the gopis were ? Ramachandra was wandering in the forest where sixty thousand rishis dwelt. They were very eager to see Him. He cast a tender glance at them. According to a certain Purana, they were born later on as the gopis of Vrindavan."

A DEVOTEE : " Sir, who may be called an *antaranga* ?"

MASTER : " Let me give an illustration. A *natmandir* has pillars inside and outside. An *antaranga* is like the inside pillars. Those who always live near the guru are the *antarangas*.

(*To Mahimacharan*) " The *jnani* wants neither a form of God nor His Incarnation. While wandering in the forest, Ramachandra saw a number of rishis. They welcomed Him to their *asrama* with great love and said to Him : ' O Rama, today our life is blessed because we have seen You. But we know You as the son of Dasaratha. Bharadvaja and other sages call You a Divine Incarnation ; but that is not our view. We meditate on the Invisible *Satchidananda*.' Rama was pleased with them and smiled,

"Ah, what a state of mind I passed through ! My mind would lose itself in the Indivisible Absolute. How many days I spent that way ! I renounced bhakti and bhakta, devotion and devotee. I became inert. I could not feel the form of my own head. I was about to die. I thought of keeping Ramlal's aunt<sup>5</sup> near me.

"I ordered the removal of all pictures and portraits from my room. When I regained outer consciousness, when the mind climbed down to the ordinary level, I felt as if I were being suffocated like a drowning person. 'At last I said to myself, 'If I can't bear people, then how shall I live ?' Then my mind was again directed to bhakti and bhakta. 'What has happened to me ?' I kept asking people. Bholanath<sup>6</sup> said to me, 'This state of mind has been described in the *Mahabharata*.' How can a man live, on coming down from the plane of samadhi ? Surely he requires devotion to God and the company of devotees. Otherwise, how will he keep his mind occupied ?"

MAHIMACHARAN (to the Master) : "Sir, can a man return from the plane of samadhi to the plane of the ordinary world ?"

MASTER (in a low voice, to Mahima) : "I shall tell you privately. You are the only one fit to hear it.

"Koar Singh also asked me that question. You see, there is a vast difference between the jiva and Isvara. Through worship and austerity, a jiva can at the utmost attain samadhi ; but he cannot come down from that state. On the other hand, an Incarnation of God can come down from samadhi. A jiva is like an officer of the king ; he can go as far as the outer court of the seven-storey palace. But the king's son has access to all the seven floors ; he can also go outside. Everybody says that no one can return from the plane of samadhi. In that case, how do you account for sages like Sankara and Ramanuja ? They retained the 'ego of Knowledge'."

MAHIMA : "That is true, indeed. Otherwise, how could they write books ?"

MASTER : "Again, there are the instances of sages like Prahlada, Narada, and Hanuman. They too retained bhakti after attaining samadhi."

MAHIMA : "That is true, sir."

MASTER : "Some people indulge in philosophical speculation and think much of themselves. Perhaps they have studied a little Vedanta. But a man cannot be egotistic if he has true knowledge. In other words, in samadhi man becomes one with God and gets rid of his egotism. True knowledge is impossible without samadhi. In samadhi man becomes one with God. Then he can have no egotism.

"Do you know what it is like ? Just at noon the sun is directly overhead. If you look around then, you do not see your shadow. Likewise, you will not find the 'shadow' of ego after attaining Knowledge, samadhi.

"But if you see in anyone a trace of 'I-consciousness' after the attainment of true Knowledge, then know that it is either the 'ego of Knowledge' or the 'ego of Devotion' or the 'servant ego'. It is not the 'ego of ignorance'.

<sup>5</sup> Referring to his own wife.

<sup>6</sup> A clerk at the Dakshineswar temple garden.



"Again, jnana and bhakti are twin paths. Whichever you follow, it is God that you will ultimately reach. The jnani looks on God in one way and the bhakta looks on Him in another way. The God of the jnani is full of brilliance, and the God of the bhakta full of sweetness."

Bhavanath was seated near the Master, listening to these words.

BHAVANATH (*to the Master*): "Sir, I have a question to ask. I don't quite understand the *Chandi*. It is written there that the Divine Mother kills all beings. What does that mean?"

MASTER: "This is all Her lila, Her sportive pleasure. That question used to bother me too. Later I found out that all is maya. Both creation and destruction are God's maya."

Girish conducted Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees to the roof, where the meal was served. There was a bright moon in the sky. The devotees took their seats. The Master occupied a seat in front of them. All were in a joyous mood.

Sri Ramakrishna was beside himself with joy at the sight of Narendra. The beloved disciple sat in the front row. Every now and then the Master asked how he was getting along. He had hardly finished half his meal when he came to Narendra with some water-melon sherbet and curd from his own plate. Tenderly he said to the disciple, "Please eat this." Then he went back to his own place.

*Saturday, May 9, 1885*

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna sat in Balaram's drawing-room in a happy mood. Many devotees were present. Narendra, M., Bhavanath, Purna, Paltu, the younger Naren, Girish, Ram, Binode, Dwija, and others sat around him.

Balaram was not there. He had gone to Monghyr for a change of air. His eldest daughter had invited Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees and celebrated the occasion with a feast. The Master was resting after the meal.

Again and again the Master asked M.: "Am I liberal-minded? Tell me."

BHAVANATH (*smiling*): "Why do you ask him? He will only keep quiet."

A beggar entered the room. He wanted to sing. The devotees listened to a song or two. Narendra liked his singing and asked him to sing more.

MASTER: "Stop! Stop! We don't want any more songs. Where is the money? (*To Narendra*) You may order the music, but who will pay?"

A DEVOTEE (*smiling*): "Sir, the beggar may think you are an amir, a wealthy aristocrat, the way you are leaning against that big pillow." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*): "He may also think I am ill."

The conversation drifted to Hazra and his egotism. For some reason he had had to go away from Dakshineswar.

NARENDRA: "Hazra now admits he was egotistic."

MASTER: "Don't believe him. He says so in order to come back to Dakshineswar. (*To the devotees*) Narendra always insists that Hazra is a grand person."

NARENDRA: "Even now I say so."

MASTER : " Why ? You have heard so much about him, and still you think so ? "

NARENDRA : " He has slight defects but many virtues. "

MASTER : " I admit that he has devotion to his ideal. He said to me, ' You don't care for me now, but later you will be seeking my company. ' A goswami came from Srerampore. He was a descendant of Advaita Goswami. He intended to spend a night or two at the temple garden. I asked him very cordially to stay. Do you know what Hazra said to me ? He said, ' Send him to the temple officer. ' What was in his mind was that the Goswami might ask for milk or food, and that he might have to give him some from his own share. I said to Hazra : ' Now, you rogue ! Even I prostrate myself before him because he is a goswami. And you, after leading a worldly life and indulging a great deal in " woman and gold ", have so much pride because of a little japa ! Aren't you ashamed of yourself ? ' "

" One realizes God through sattva. Rajas and tamas take one away from Him. The scriptures describe sattva as white, rajas as red, and tamas as black. Once I asked Hazra : ' Tell me what you think of the people that come here. How much sattva does each one possess ? ' He said, ' Narendra has one hundred per cent and I have one hundred and ten per cent. ' ' What about me ? ' I asked. And he said : ' You still have a trace of pink. You have only seventy-five per cent, I should say. ' (*All laugh.*)

" Hazra used to practise japa at Dakshineswar. While telling his beads, he would also try to do a little brokerage business. He has a debt of a few thousand rupees which he must clear up. About the brahmin cooks of the temple he remarked, ' Do you think I talk with people of that sort ? ' "

" The truth is that you cannot attain God if you have even a trace of desire. Subtle is the way of dharma. If you are trying to thread a needle, you will not succeed if the thread has even a slight fibre sticking out. "

" There are people who perform japa for thirty years and still do not attain any result. Why ? A gangrenous sore requires very drastic treatment. Ordinary medicine won't cure it. "

" No matter how much sadhana you practise, you will not realize the goal as long as you have desire. But this also is true, that one can realize the goal in a moment through the grace of God, through His kindness. Take the case of a room that has been dark a thousand years. If somebody suddenly brings a lamp into it, the room is lighted in an instant. "

" Suppose a poor man's son has fallen into the good graces of a rich person. He marries his daughter. Immediately he gets an equipage, clothes, furniture, a house, and other things. "

A DEVOTEE : " Sir, how does one receive God's grace ? "

MASTER : " God has the nature of a child. A child is sitting with gems in the skirt of his cloth. Many a person passes by him along the road. Many of them pray to him for gems. But he hides the gems with his hands and says, turning away his face, ' No, I will not give any away. ' But another man comes along. He doesn't ask for the gems, and yet the child runs after him and offers him the gems, begging him to accept them. "

"One cannot realize God without renunciation. Who will accept my words? I have been seeking a companion, a sympathetic soul who will understand my feelings. When I see a great devotee, I say to myself, 'Perhaps he will accept my ideal.' But later on I find that he behaves in a different way.

"A ghost sought a companion. One becomes a ghost if one dies from an accident on a Saturday or a Tuesday. So whenever the ghost found someone who seemed to be dying from an accident on either of these days, he would run to him. He would say to himself that at last he had found his companion. But no sooner would he run to the man than he would see the man getting up. The man, perhaps, had fallen from a roof and after a few moments regained consciousness.

"Once Mathur Babu was in an ecstatic mood. He behaved like a drunkard and could not look after his work. At this all said: 'Who will look after his estate if he behaves like that? Certainly the young priest' has cast a spell upon him.'

"During one of Narendra's early visits I touched his chest and he became unconscious. Regaining consciousness, he wept and said: "Oh, why did you do that to me? I have a father! I have a mother!" This 'I' and 'mine' spring from ignorance.

"A guru said to his disciple: 'The world is illusory. Come away with me.' 'But, revered sir,' said the disciple, 'my people at home—my father, my mother, my wife—love me so much. How can I give them up?' The guru said: 'No doubt you now have this feeling of "I" and "mine" and say that they love you; but this is all an illusion of your mind. I shall teach you a trick, and you will know whether they love you truly or not.' Saying this, the teacher gave the disciple a pill and said to him: 'Swallow this at home. You will appear to be a corpse, but you will not lose consciousness. You will see everything and hear everything. Then I shall come to your house and gradually you will regain your normal state.'

"The disciple followed the teacher's instructions and lay on his bed like a dead person. The house was filled with loud wailing. His mother, his wife, and the others lay on the ground weeping bitterly. Just then a brahmin entered the house and said to them, 'What is the matter with you?' 'This boy is dead', they replied. The brahmin felt his pulse and said: 'How is that? No, he is not dead. I have a medicine for him that will cure him completely.' The joy of the relatives was unbounded; it seemed to them that heaven itself had come down into their house. 'But', said the brahmin, 'I must tell you something else. Another person must take some of this medicine first, and then the boy must swallow the rest. But the other person will die. I see he has so many dear relatives here; one of them will certainly agree to take the medicine. I see his wife and mother crying bitterly. Surely they will not hesitate to take it.'

"At once the weeping stopped and all sat quiet. The mother said: 'Well, this is a big family. Suppose I die; then who will look after the family?' She fell into a reflective mood. The wife, who had been crying a minute before

*Sri Ramakrishna, who was at that time a priest in the Kali temple.*

and bemoaning her ill luck, said : ' Well, he has gone the way of mortals. I have these two or three young children. Who will look after them if I die ? '

" The disciple saw everything and heard everything. He stood up at once and said to the teacher : ' Let us go, revered sir. I will follow you.' (All laugh.)

" Another disciple said to his teacher : ' Revered sir, my wife takes great care of me. It is for her sake that I cannot give up the world.' The disciple practised hathayoga. The teacher taught him, too, a trick to test his wife's love. One day there was a great wailing in his house. The neighbours came running and saw the hathayogi seated in a posture, his limbs paralysed and distorted. They thought he was dead. His wife fell on the ground, weeping piteously : ' Oh, what has befallen me ? How have you provided for our future ? Oh, friends, I never dreamt I should meet such a fate ! '

" In the mean time the relatives and friends had brought a cot to take the corpse out. But suddenly a difficulty arose as they started to move it. Since the body was twisted and stiff, it could not be taken out through the door. A neighbour quickly brought an axe and began to chop away the door-frame. The wife was crying bitterly, when she heard the sound of the axe. She ran to the door. ' What are you doing, friends ? ' she asked, still weeping. The neighbour said, ' We can't take the body out ; so we are chopping away the door-frame.'

" ' Please ', said the wife, ' don't do any such thing. I am a widow now ; I have no one to look after me. I have to bring up these young children. If you destroy this door, I shall not be able to replace it. Friends, death is inevitable for all, and my husband cannot be called back to life. You had better cut his limbs.' The hathayogi at once stood up. The effect of the medicine had worn off. He said to his wife : ' You evil one ! You want to cut off my hands and feet, do you ? ' So saying, he renounced home and followed his teacher. (All laugh.)

" Many women make a show of grief. Knowing beforehand that they will have to weep, they first take off their nose-rings and other ornaments, put them securely in a box, and lock it. Then they fall on the ground and weep. ' O friends, what has befallen us ? ' "

NARENDRA : " How can I believe, without proof, that God incarnates Himself as a man ? "

GIRISH : " Faith alone is sufficient. What is the proof that these objects exist here ? Faith alone is the proof. "

A DEVOTEE : " Have philosophers been able to prove that the external world exists outside us ? But they say we have an irresistible belief in it. "

GIRISH (to Narendra) : " You wouldn't believe, even if God appeared before you. God Himself might say that He was God born as a man, but perhaps you would say that He was a liar and a cheat. "

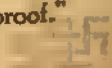
The conversation turned to the immortality of the gods.

NARENDRA : " What is the proof of their immortality ? "

GIRISH : " You wouldn't believe it even if the gods appeared before you. "

NARENDRA : " That the immortals existed in the past requires proof. "

M. whispered something to Paltu.





PALTU (*smiling to Narendra*): "What need is there for the immortals to be without beginning? To be immortal one need only be without end."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Narendra is the son of a lawyer, but Paltu of a deputy magistrate." (*All laugh.*)

All kept silent awhile.

JOGIN (*smiling*): "He [meaning the Master] doesn't accept Narendra's words any more."

MASTER (*smiling*): "One day I remarked that the chatak bird doesn't drink any water except that which falls from the sky. Narendra said, 'The chatak drinks ordinary water as well.' Then I said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, then are my words untrue?' I was greatly worried about it. Another day, later on, Narendra was here. Several birds were flying about in the room. He exclaimed, 'There! There!' 'What is there?' I asked. He said, 'There is your chatak!' I found they were only bats. Since that day I don't accept what he says. (*All laugh.*)

"At Jadu Mallick's garden house Narendra said to me, 'The forms of God that you see are the fiction of your mind.' I was amazed and said to him, 'But they speak too!' Narendra answered, 'Yes, one may think so.' I went to the temple and wept before the Mother. 'O Mother,' I said, 'what is this? Then is this all false? How could Narendra say that?' Instantly I had a revelation. I saw Consciousness—Indivisible Consciousness—and a divine being formed of that Consciousness. The divine form said to me, 'If your words are untrue, how is it that they tally with the facts?' Thereupon I said to Narendra: 'You rogue! You created unbelief in my mind. Don't come here any more.'"

The discussion continued. Narendra was arguing. He was then slightly over twenty-two years of age.

NARENDRA (*to Girish, M., and the others*): "How am I to believe in the words of scripture? The *Mahanirvana Tantra* says, in one place, that unless a man attains, the Knowledge of Brahman he goes to hell; and the same book says, in another place, that there is no salvation without the worship of Parvati, the Divine Mother. Manu writes about himself in the *Manusamhita*; Moses describes his own death in the Pentateuch.

"The Samkhya philosophy says that God does not exist, because there is no proof of His existence. Again, the same philosophy says that one must accept the Vedas and that they are eternal.

"But I don't say that these are not true. I simply don't understand them. Please explain them to me. People have explained the scriptures according to their fancy. Which explanation shall we accept? White light coming through a red medium appears red, through a green medium, green."

A DEVOTEE: "The *Gita* contains the words of God."

MASTER: "Yes, the *Gita* is the essence of all scriptures. A sannyasi may or may not keep with him another book, but he always carries a pocket *Gita*."

A DEVOTEE: "The *Gita* contains the words of Krishna."

NARENDRA: "Yes, Krishna or any fellow for that matter!"



Sri Ramakrishna was amazed at these words of Narendra.

MASTER : " This is a fine discussion. There are two interpretations of the scriptures : the literal and the real. One should accept the real meaning alone—what agrees with the words of God. There is a vast difference between the words written in a letter and the direct words of its writer. The scriptures are like the words of the letter ; the words of God are direct words. I do not accept anything unless it agrees with the direct words of the Divine Mother."

The conversation again turned to Divine Incarnation.

NARENDRA : " It is enough to have faith in God. I don't care about what He is doing or what He hangs from. Infinite is the universe ; infinite are the Incarnations."

As Sri Ramakrishna heard the words, " Infinite is the universe ; infinite are the Incarnations ", he said with folded hands, " Ah ! "

M. whispered something to Bhavanath.

BHAVANATH : " M. says : ' As long as I have not seen the elephant, how can I know whether it can pass through the eye of a needle ? I do know no God ; how can I understand through reason whether or not He can incarnate Himself as man ? '

MASTER : " Everything is possible for God. It is He who casts the spell. The magician swallows the knife and takes it out again ; he swallows stones and bricks."

A DEVOTEE : " The Brahmos say that ■ man should perform his worldly duties. He must not renounce them."

GIRISH : " Yes, I saw something like that in their paper, the *Salabha Samachar*. But a man cannot even finish all the works that are necessary for him in order to know God, and still he speaks of worldly duties."

Sri Ramakrishna smiled a little, looked at M., and made a sign with his eye, as if to say, " What he says is right."

M. understood that this question of performing duties was an extremely difficult one.

Purna arrived.

MASTER : " Who told you about our being here ? "

PURNA : " Sarada."

MASTER (to the woman devotees) : " Give him some refreshments."

Narendra was preparing to sing. The Master and the devotees were eager to hear his music. Narendra sang :

Siva, Thy ready thunderbolt rules over meadows, hills, and sky !  
O God of Gods ! O Slayer of Time ! Thou the Great Void, the King  
of Dharma !  
Siva, Thou Blessed One, redeem me ; take away my grievous sin.

He sang again :

Sweet is Thy name, O Refuge of the humble !  
It falls like sweetest nectar on our ears  
And comforts us, Beloved of our souls ! . . .

Again :

Why, O mind, do you never call on Him  
Who takes away all fear of danger ?  
Tricked by delusion you forget yourself,  
Enamoured of the world's bleak wilderness.  
Alas, what mockery is here !

Comrades and wealth you cannot always keep ;  
Take care lest you forget Him quite.  
Give up the false, O mind ! Adore the Real ;  
And all the grief will vanish from your life.  
Keep my good counsel in your heart.

With sounding voice proclaim Lord Hari's name  
And cast away your false desires,  
If you would cross the ocean of this life ;  
Surrender to Him body, mind, and soul,  
And worship Him with trusting love.

PALTU : " Won't you sing that one ? "

NARENDRA : " Which one ? "

PALTU : " " When I behold Thy peerless face. " "

Narendra sang :

When I behold Thy peerless face, beaming with love, O Lord,  
What fear have I of earthly woe or of the frown of sorrow ?  
As the first ray of the dawning sun dispels the dark,  
So too, Lord, when Thy blessed light bursts forth within the heart,  
It scatters all our grief and pain with sweetest balm.  
When on Thy love and grace I ponder, in my heart's deepest  
depths,  
Tears of joy stream down my cheeks beyond restraining.  
Hail, Gracious Lord ! Hail, Gracious One ! I shall proclaim Thy  
love.  
May my life-breath depart from me as I perform Thy works !

At M.'s request Narendra sang again, M. and many of the devotees  
listening with folded hands :

Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss !  
Roll on the ground and weep, chanting Hari's sweet name ! . . .

Narendra sang again :

Meditate, O my mind, on the Lord Hari,  
The Stainless One, Pure Spirit through and through.  
How peerless is the light that in Him shines !  
How soul-bewitching is His wondrous form !  
How dear is He to all His devotees ! . . .

He sang another song :

This universe, wondrous and infinite,  
O Lord, is Thy handiwork ;  
And the whole world is a treasure-house  
Full of Thy beauty and grace.  
The stars glisten innumerable,

Like gems on a necklace of gold ;  
 How can the myriad suns and moons  
 Ever be numbered above ?  
 The earth is glowing with grain and gold,  
 Thine ever brimming store ;  
 Uncounted stars, O God, sing forth :  
 Blessed, blessed art Thou !

Then he sang :

Upon the tray of the sky blaze bright  
 The lamps of sun and moon ;  
 Like diamonds shine the glittering stars  
 To deck Thy wondrous form. . . .

He continued :

Fasten your mind, O man, on the Primal Purusha,  
 Who is the Cause of all causes,  
 The Stainless One, the Beginningless Truth,  
 As Prana He pervades the infinite universe ;  
 The man of faith beholds Him,  
 Living, resplendent, the Root of all. . . .

At Narayan's request Narendra sang :

Come ! Come, Mother ! Doll of my soul ! My heart's Delight !  
 In my heart's lotus come and sit, that I may see Thy face.  
 Alas ! sweet Mother, even from birth I have suffered much ;  
 But I have born it all, Thou knowest, gazing at Thee.  
 Open the lotus of my heart, dear Mother ! Reveal Thyself there.

Then Narendra sang a song of his own choice :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;  
 Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave. . . .

As Sri Ramakrishna heard this soul-enthraling song, he went into samadhi. Narendra again sang :

Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss ! . . .

The Master was in samadhi. He was sitting on a pillow, dangling his feet, facing the north and leaning against the wall. The devotees were seated around him.

In an ecstatic mood Sri Ramakrishna talked to the Divine Mother. He said : "I shall take my meal now. Art Thou come ? Hast Thou found Thy lodging and left Thy baggage there and then come out ?" He continued : "I don't enjoy anybody's company now. Why should I listen to the music, Mother ? That diverts part of my mind to the outside world."

The Master was gradually regaining consciousness of the outer world. Looking at the devotees he said : "Years ago I used to be amazed to see people keeping kai fish alive in a pot of water. I would say : 'How cruel these people are ! They will finally kill the fish.' But later, as changes came over my mind, I realized that bodies are like pillow-cases. It doesn't matter whether they remain or drop off."

BHAVANATH : "Then may one injure a man without incurring sin ? Kill him ?"

MASTER : "Yes, it is permissible if one has achieved that state of mind. But not everyone has it. It is the state of Brahmajnana.

"By coming down a step or two from samadhi I enjoy bhakti and bhakta.

"There exist in God both vidya and avidya. Vidyamaya leads one to God, and avidyamaya away from Him. Knowledge, devotion, compassion, and renunciation belong to the realm of vidya. With the help of these a man comes near God. One step more and he attains God, Knowledge of Brahman. In that state he clearly feels and sees that it is God who has become everything. He has nothing to give up and nothing to accept. It is impossible for him to be angry with anyone.

"One day I was riding in a carriage. I saw two prostitutes standing on a verandah. They appeared to me to be embodiments of the Divine Mother Herself. I saluted them.

"When I first attained this exalted state I could not worship Mother Kali or give Her the food offering. Haladhari and Hriday told me that on account of this the temple officer had slandered me. But I only laughed ; I wasn't in the least angry. Attain Brahmajnana and then roam about enjoying God's lila. A holy man came to a town and went about seeing the sights. He met another sadhu, an acquaintance. The latter said : 'I see you are gadding about. Where is your baggage ? I hope no thief has stolen it.' The first sadhu said : 'Not at all. First I found a lodging, put my things in the room in proper order, and locked the door. Now I am enjoying the fun of the city.'" *(All laugh).*

BHAVANATH : "These are very lofty words."

M. *(to himself)* : "Tasting God's lila after Brahmajnana ! Climbing down to the ordinary plane of consciousness after the attainment of samadhi !"

MASTER *(to M. and the others)* : "Is it an easy thing to obtain the Knowledge of Brahman ? It is not possible unless the mind is annihilated. The guru said to the disciple, 'Give me your mind and I shall give you Knowledge.' In this state one enjoys only spiritual talk and the company of devotees.

*(To Ram)* "You are a physician. You know that medicine works only when it mixes with the patient's blood and becomes one with it. Likewise, in the State of Brahmajnana one sees God both within and without. One sees that it is God Himself who has become the body, mind, life, and soul."

M. *(to himself)* : "Assimilation !"

MASTER : "A man attains Brahmajnana as soon as his mind is annihilated. With the annihilation of the mind dies the ego, which says 'I,' 'I.' One also attains the Knowledge of Brahman by following the path of devotion. One also attains It by following the path of knowledge, that is to say, discrimination. The jnanis discriminate, saying, 'Neti, neti,' that is, 'All this is illusory, like a dream.' They analyse the world through the process of 'Not this, not this' ; it is maya. When the world vanishes, only the jivas, that is to say, so many egos, remain.

"Each ego may be likened to a pot. Suppose there are ten pots filled with water, and the sun is reflected in them. How many suns do you see?"

A DEVOTEE: "Ten reflections. Besides, there certainly exists the real sun."

MASTER: "Suppose you break one pot. How many suns do you see now?"

DEVOTEE: "Nine reflected suns. But there certainly exists the real sun."

MASTER: "All right. Suppose you break nine pots. How many suns do you see now?"

DEVOTEE: "One reflected sun. But there certainly exists the real sun."

MASTER (to Girish): "What remains when the last pot is broken?"

GIRISH: "That real sun, Sir."

MASTER: "No. What remains cannot be described. What *is* remains. How will you know there is a real sun unless there is a reflected sun? 'I-consciousness' is destroyed in samadhi. A man climbing down from samadhi to the lower plane cannot describe what he has seen there.

It was late in the evening. Lamps were burning in the drawing room. Sri Ramakrishna was in a spiritual mood. The devotees sat around him.

MASTER (in the ecstatic mood): "There is no one else here; so I am telling you this. He who from the depth of his soul seeks to know God will certainly realize Him. He must. He alone who is restless for God and seeks nothing but Him will certainly realize Him.

"Those who belong to this place<sup>5</sup> have already come. Those who will come from now on are outsiders. Such people will come now and then. The Divine Mother will tell them: 'Do this. Call on God in this way.'

"Why doesn't man's mind dwell on God? You see, more powerful than God is His Mahamaya, His Power of Illusion. More powerful than the judge is his orderly. (*All laugh.*)

"Rama said to Narada: 'I am very much pleased with your prayer. Ask a boon of Me.' Narada replied, 'O Rama, may I have pure devotion to Your Lotus Feet, and may I not be deluded by Your world-bewitching maya!' Rama said, 'Be it so; ask for something else.' Narada replied, 'No, Rama, I do not want any other boon.'

"Everyone is under the spell of this world-bewitching maya. When God assumes a human body, He too comes under the spell. Rama wandered about weeping for Sita. 'Brahman weeps entangled in the snare of the five elements.' But you must remember this: God, by His mere will, can liberate Himself from this snare."

BHAVANATH: "The guard of a railway train shuts himself of his own will in a carriage; but he can get out whenever he wants to."

MASTER: "The Isvarakotis—Divine Incarnations, for instance—can liberate themselves whenever they want to; but the jivakotis cannot. Jivas are imprisoned by 'woman and gold'. When the doors and windows of a room are fastened with screws, how can a man get out?"

The inner circle of the Master's devotees.



BHAVANATH (*smiling*) : " Ordinary men are like the third-class passengers on a railway train. When the doors of their compartments are locked, they have no way to get out."

GIRISH : " If a man is so strongly tied hand and foot, then what is his way ?"

MASTER : " He has nothing to fear if God Himself, as the guru, cuts the chain of Maya."

# XLI

## AT RAM'S HOUSE

Saturday, May 23, 1885

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting in the drawing-room on the ground floor of Ram's house. He was surrounded by devotees and was conversing with them. Mahima sat in front of him, M. to his left. Paltu, Bhavanath, Nityagopal, Haramohan, and a few others sat around him. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon. The Master inquired after several devotees.

MASTER (to M.): "Hasn't the younger Naren arrived yet?"

Presently the younger Naren entered the room.

MASTER: "What about him?"

M: "Who, sir?"

MASTER: "Kishori. Isn't Girish Ghosh coming? What about Narendra?"

A few minutes later Narendra arrived and saluted Sri Ramakrishna.

MASTER (to the devotees): "It would be fine if Kedar were here. He agrees with Girish. (To Mahima, smiling) He says the same thing."<sup>1</sup>

Ram had arranged the kirtan. With folded hands the musician said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Sir, I can begin if you give the order."

The Master drank some water and chewed spices from a small bag. He asked M. to close the bag.

The musician started the kirtan. As Sri Ramakrishna heard the sound of the drum he went into an ecstatic mood. While listening to the prelude of the kirtan he plunged into deep samadhi. He placed his legs on the lap of Nityagopal, who was sitting near him. The devotee, too, was in an ecstatic mood. He was weeping. The other devotees looked on intently.

Regaining partial consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna said: "From the Nitya to the Lila and from the Lila to the Nitya. (To Nityagopal) What is your ideal?"

NITYAGOPAL: "Both are good."

Sri Ramakrishna closed his eyes and said: "Is it only this? Does God exist only when the eyes are closed, and cease to exist when the eyes are opened? The Lila belongs to Him to whom the Nitya belongs, and the Nitya belongs to Him to whom the Lila belongs. (To Mahima) My dear sir, let me tell you—"

MAHIMA: "Revered sir, both are according to the will of God."

<sup>1</sup> Kedar spoke of Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God.

MASTER : "Some people climb the seven floors of a building and cannot get down ; but some climb up and then, at will, visit the lower floors.

"Uddhava said to the gopis : 'He whom you address as your Krishna dwells in all beings. It is He alone who has become the universe and its living beings.'

"Therefore I say, does a man meditate on God only when his eyes are closed ? Doesn't he see anything of God when his eyes are open ?"

MAHIMA : "I have a question to ask, sir. A lover of God needs Nirvana<sup>2</sup> some time or other, doesn't he ?"

MASTER : "It can't be said that bhaktas need Nirvana. According to some schools there is an eternal Krishna and there are also His eternal devotees. Krishna is Spirit embodied, and His Abode also is Spirit embodied. Krishna is eternal and the devotees also are eternal. Krishna and the devotees are like the moon and the stars—always near each other. You yourself repeat : 'What need is there of penance if God is seen within and without ? Further, I have told you that the devotee who is born with an element of Vishnu cannot altogether get rid of bhakti. Once I fell into the clutches of a jnani,<sup>3</sup> who made me listen to Vedanta for eleven months. But he couldn't altogether destroy the seed of bhakti in me. No matter where my mind wandered, it would come back to the Divine Mother. Whenever I sang of Her, Nangta would weep and say, 'Ah ! What is this ?' You see, he was such a great jnani and still he wept. (To the younger Naren and the others) Remember the popular saying that if a man drinks the juice of the alekh creeper, a plant grows inside his stomach. Once the seed of bhakti is sown, the effect is inevitable : it will gradually grow into a tree with flowers and fruits.

"You may reason and argue a thousand times, but if you have the seed of bhakti within you, you will surely come back to Hari."

The devotees listened silently to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna asked Mahima, laughing, "What is the thing you enjoy most ?"

MAHIMA (smiling) : "Nothing, sir. I like mangoes."

MASTER (smiling) : "All by yourself ? Or do you want to share them with others ?"

MAHIMA (smiling) : "I am not so anxious to give others a share. I may as well eat them all by myself."

MASTER : "But do you know my attitude ? I accept both, the Nitya and the Lila. Doesn't God exist if one looks around with eyes open ? After realizing Him, one knows that He is both the Absolute and the universe. It is He who is the Indivisible Satchidananda. Again, it is He who has become the universe and its living beings.

"One needs sadhana. Here study of the scriptures will not do. I noticed that though Vidyasagar had no doubt read a great deal, he had not realized what was inside him ; he was satisfied with helping boys get their education, but had not tasted the Bliss of God. What will mere study accomplish ?

<sup>2</sup> Nirvana, or total annihilation of the ego, is the ideal of the jnanis, the non-dualists.

<sup>3</sup> The Master was speaking of Totapuri. Whom he always referred to as "Nangta", the "naked one".

How little one assimilates ! The almanac may forecast twenty measures of rain ; but you don't get a drop by squeezing its pages."

MAHIMA : " We have so many duties in the world. Where is the time for sadhana ? "

MASTER : " Why should you say such a thing ? It is you who describe the world as illusory, like a dream.

" Rama and Lakshmana wanted to go to Ceylon. But the ocean was before them. Lakshmana was angry. Taking his bow and arrow, he said : ' I shall kill Varuna. This ocean prevents our going to Ceylon.' Rama explained the matter to him, saying : ' Lakshmana, all that you are seeing is unreal, like a dream. The ocean is unreal. Your anger is also unreal. It is equally unreal to think of destroying one unreal thing by means of another.' "

Mahimacharan kept quiet. He had many duties in the world. He had lately started a school to help others.

MASTER (to Mahima) : " Sambhu once said to me : ' I have some money. It is my desire to spend it for good works—for schools and dispensaries, roads, and so forth.' I said to him : ' It will be good if you can do these works in a selfless spirit. But it is extremely difficult to perform unselfish action. Desire for fruit comes from nobody knows where. Let me ask you something. Suppose God appears before you ; will you pray to Him, then, for such things as schools and dispensaries and hospitals ? ' "

A DEVOTEE : " Sir, what is the way for worldly people ? "

MASTER : " The company of holy men. Worldly people should listen to spiritual talk. They are in a state of madness, intoxicated with ' woman and gold '. A drunkard should be given rice-water as an antidote. Drinking it slowly, he gradually recovers his normal consciousness.

" A worldly person should also receive instructions from a sadguru, ■ real teacher. Such a teacher has certain signs. You should hear about Benares only from a man who has been to Benares and seen it. Mere book-learning will not do. One should not receive instruction from a pundit who has not realized the world to be unreal. Only if a pundit has discrimination and renunciation is he entitled to instruct.

" Samadhyayi remarked that God was dry. Think of his speaking like that of Him who is the embodiment of sweetness ! It sounds like the remark, ' My uncle's cow-shed is full of horses.' (All laugh.)

" Yes, a worldly person is in a state of intoxication. He always says to himself : ' It is I who am doing everything. All these—the house and family—are mine.' Baring his teeth, he says : ' What will happen to my wife and children without me ? How will they get along ? Who will look after my wife and children ? ' Rakhal said one day, ' What will happen to my wife ? ' "

HARAMOHAN : " Did Rakhal say that ? "

MASTER : " What else could he do ? He who has knowledge has ignorance also. ' How amazing ! ' Lakshmana said to Rama. ' Even a sage like Vasishtha is stricken with grief because of the death of his sons ! ' ' Brother,' replied Rama, ' he who has knowledge has ignorance also. Therefore go beyond both knowledge and ignorance.'

"Suppose a thorn has pierced a man's foot. He picks another thorn to pull out the first one. After extracting the first thorn with the help of the second, he throws both away. One should use the thorn of knowledge to pull out the thorn of ignorance. Then one throws away both the thorns, knowledge and ignorance, and attains vijñana. What is vijñana? It is to know God distinctly by realizing His existence through an intuitive experience and to speak to Him intimately. That is why Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Go beyond the three gunas.'

"In order to attain vijñana one has to accept the help of vidyamaya. Vidyamaya includes discrimination—that is to say, God is real and the world illusory—and dispassion, and also chanting God's name and glories, meditation, the company of holy persons, prayer, and so forth. Vidyamaya may be likened to the last few steps before the roof. Next is the roof, the realization of God.

"Worldly people are in a state of chronic intoxication—mad with 'woman and gold'; they are insensible to spiritual ideas. That is why I love the youngsters not yet stained by 'woman and gold'. They are 'good receptacles' and may become useful in God's work. But as for worldly people, you lose almost everything while trying to eliminate the worthless stuff in them. They are like bony fish—almost all bones and very little meat.

"Worldly people are like mangoes struck by hail. If you want to offer them to God, you have to purify them by sprinkling them with Ganges water. Even then they are seldom used in the temple worship. If you are to use them at all, you have to apply Brahmajñana, that is to say, you have to persuade yourself that it is God alone who has become everything."

A Theosophist gentleman arrived with Aswini Kumar Dutta and the son of Behari Bhaduri. The Mukherji brothers entered the room and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. Arrangements were being made for devotional music in the courtyard. At the first beat of the drum the Master left the room and went there. The devotees followed him.

Bhavanath introduced Aswini to the Master. The Master introduced him to M. Aswini and M. were talking together when Narendra arrived. Sri Ramakrishna said to Aswini, "This is Narendra."

*Saturday, June 13, 1885*

About three o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was resting in his room after the midday meal. A pundit was sitting on a mat on the floor. Near the north door of the room stood a brahmin woman who had recently lost her only daughter and was stricken with grief. Kishori, too, was in the room. M. arrived and saluted the Master. He was accompanied by Dwija and a few other devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna was not well. He had been suffering from an inflamed throat. These were the hot days of summer. M. was not keeping well either, and of late he had not been able to visit Sri Ramakrishna frequently.

MASTER (to M.): "How are you? It is nice to see you. The bel-fruit you sent me was very good."

M: "I am slightly better now, sir."



MASTER : " It is very hot. Take a little ice now and then. I have been feeling the heat very much myself ; so I ate a great deal of ice-cream. That is why I have this sore throat. The saliva smells very bad.

" I have said to the Divine Mother : ' Mother, make me well. I shall not eat ice-cream any more.' Next I said to Her that I wouldn't eat ice either. Since I have given my word to the Mother, I shall certainly not eat these things. But sometimes I become forgetful. Once I said that I wouldn't eat fish on Sundays ; but one Sunday I forgot and ate fish. But I cannot consciously go back on my word. The other day I asked a devotee to bring my water-jug to the pine-grove. As he had to go elsewhere, another man brought the jug. But I couldn't use that water. I was helpless. I waited there until the first man brought water for me.

" When I renounced everything with an offering of flowers at the Lotus Feet of the Mother, I said : ' Here, Mother, take Thy holiness, take Thy unholiness. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma, take Thy adharma. Here, Mother, take Thy sin, take Thy virtue. Here, Mother, take Thy good, take Thy evil. And give me only pure bhakti.' But I could not say, ' Here, Mother, take Thy truth, take Thy falsehood.' "

A devotee had brought some ice. Again and again the Master asked M., " Shall I eat it ? "

M. said humbly, " Please don't eat it without consulting the Mother." Sri Ramakrishna could not take the ice.

MASTER : " It is the bhakta, and not the jnani, who discriminates between holiness and unholiness. Vijay's mother-in-law said to me : ' How little I have achieved of my spiritual ideal ! I cannot take food from everybody.' I said to her : ' Is eating everybody's food a sign of jnana ? A dog eats anything and everything. Does that make it a jnani ? '

(To M.) " Why do I eat a variety of dishes ? In order not to become monotonous. Otherwise I should have to renounce the devotees.

" I said to Keshab : ' If I instruct you from a still higher standpoint, then you won't be able to preserve your organization. In the state of jnana organizations and things like that become unreal, like a dream.'

" One time I gave up fish. At first I suffered from it ; afterwards it didn't bother me much. If someone burns up a bird's nest, the bird flies about ; it takes shelter in the sky. If a man truly realizes that the body and the world are unreal, then his soul attains samādhi.

" Formerly I had the state of mind of a jnani : I couldn't enjoy the company of men. I would hear that a jnani or a bhakta lived at a certain place ; then, a few days later, I would learn that he was dead. Everything seemed to me impermanent ; so I couldn't enjoy people's company. Later the Mother brought my mind down to a lower plane ; She so changed my mind that I could enjoy love of God and His devotees."

Next the Master began to talk about Divine Incarnation.

MASTER (to M.) : " Do you know why God incarnates Himself as a man ? It is because through a human body one can hear His words. He sports through it. He tastes divine bliss through a human body. But through His

other devotees God manifests only a small part of Himself. A devotee is like something you get a little juice from after much sucking—like a flower you get a drop of honey from after much sucking. (To M.) Do you understand this ?”

M : “ Yes, sir. Very Well.”

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk to Dwija, who was about sixteen years old. His father had married a second time. Dwija often accompanied M. to Dakshineswar, and Sri Ramakrishna was fond of him. The boy said that his father opposed his coming to Dakshineswar.

MASTER : “ And your brothers too ? Do they speak slightly of me ? ”

Dwija did not answer.

M. (to the Master) : “ Those who speak slightly of you will be cured of it after getting a few more blows from the world.”

MASTER (referring to Dwija's brothers) : “ They live with their step-mother. So they are getting blows.”

All were silent a moment.

MASTER (to M.) : “ Introduce Dwija to Purna some time.”

M : “ Yes, I shall. (To Dwija) Go to Panihati.”

MASTER : “ I am asking everyone to send people to Panihati. (To M.) Won't you go ? ”

Sri Ramakrishna intended to visit the religious festival at Panihati ; so he was asking the devotees to go too.

M : “ Yes, sir, I want to go.”

MASTER : “ We shall engage a big boat ; then it won't toss about. Will Girish Ghosh be there ? ”

Sri Ramakrishna looked steadily at Dwija.

MASTER : “ Well, there are so many youngsters in the city ; why does this boy come here ? (To M.) Tell me what you think. Certainly he has inherited some good tendencies from his previous birth.” •

M : “ Undoubtedly, sir.”

MASTER : “ There is such a thing as inborn tendencies. When a man has performed many good actions in his previous births, in the final birth he becomes guileless. In the final birth he acts somewhat like a madcap.

“ To tell you the truth, everything happens by God's will. When He says ‘ Yea ’, everything comes to pass, and when He says ‘ Nay ’, everything comes to a standstill.

“ Why is it that one man should not bless another ? Because nothing can happen by man's will : things come to pass or disappear by God's will.

“ The other day I went to Captain's house. I saw some young boys going along the road. They belong to a different class. I saw one of them, about nineteen or twenty years old, with his hair parted on the side. He was whistling as he walked along.

“ I see some immersed in the thickest *tamas*. They play the flute and are proud of it.

(To Dwija) “ Why should a man of Knowledge be afraid of criticism ? His understanding is as immovable as the anvil in a blacksmith's shop. Blows from the hammer fall continually on the anvil but cannot affect it in the least.

"I saw X—'s father going along the street."

M : "He is a very artless man."

MASTER : "But he has red eyes."

Sri Ramakrishna told the devotees about his visit to Captain's house. Captain had criticized the young men who visited the Master. Perhaps Hazra had poisoned his mind.

MASTER : "I was talking to Captain. I said : 'Nothing exists except Purusha and Prakriti. Narada said to Rama, "O Rama, all the men You see are parts of Yourself, and all the women are parts of Sita."'"

"Captain was highly pleased. He said : 'You alone have the right perception. All men are really Rama, being parts of Rama ; all women are really Sita, being parts of Sita.'

"Immediately after saying this he began to criticize the young devotees. He said : 'They study English books and don't discriminate about their food. It is not good that they should visit you frequently. It may do you harm. Hazra is a real man, a grand fellow. Don't allow those young people to visit you so much.' At first I said, 'What can I do if they come ?' Then I gave him some mortal blows. His daughter laughed. I said to him : 'God is far, far away from the worldly-minded. But God is very near the man—nay, within a distance of three cubits—whose mind is free from worldliness.' Speaking of Rakhal, Captain said, 'He eats with all sorts of people.' Perhaps he had heard it from Hazra. Thereupon I said to him : 'A man may practise intense austerity and japa, but he won't achieve anything if his mind dwells on the world. But blessed is the man who keeps his mind on God even though he eats pork. He will certainly realize God in due time. Hazra, with all his austerity and japa, doesn't allow an opportunity to slip by for earning money as a broker.'

"'Yes, yes !' said Captain. 'You are right.' I said to him further, 'A few minutes ago you said that all men were parts of Rama and all women parts of Sita, and now you are talking like this !'

Captain said : 'Yes, that's true. But you don't love everybody.'

"I said : 'According to the scriptures, water is God. We see water everywhere. But some water we drink, some we bathe in, and some we use for washing dirty things. Here sit your wife and daughter. I see them as embodiments of the Blessed Mother.'

"Thereupon Captain said, 'Yes, yes ! That's true.' He wanted to apologize by touching my feet."

After speaking thus, Sri Ramakrishna laughed. Then he began to tell of Captain's many virtues.

MASTER : "Captain has many virtues. Every day he attends to his devotions. He himself performs the worship of the Family Deity. How many mantras he recites while bathing the image ! He is a great ritualist. He performs his daily devotions, such as worship, japa, arati, recital of the scriptures, and chanting of hymns.

"I scolded Captain and said : 'Too much reading has spoiled you. Don't read any more.'

"About my own spiritual state Captain said, 'Your soul, like a bird, is ready to fly.' There are two entities : jivatma, the embodied soul, and Paramatma, the Supreme Soul. The embodied soul is the bird. The Supreme Soul is like the akasa ; it is the Chidakasa, the akasa of Consciousness. Captain said : 'Your embodied soul flies into the akasa of Consciousness. Thus you go into samadhi.'

(Smiling) " He criticized the Bengalis. He said : ' The Bengalis are fools. They have a gem ' near them, but they cannot recognize it.'

" Captain's father was a great devotee. He was a subadar in the English army. Even on the battle-field he would perform his worship at the proper time. With one hand he would worship Siva and with the other he would wield his gun and sword.

(To M.) " But Captain is engaged in worldly duties day and night. Whenever I go to his house I see him surrounded by his wife and children. Besides, his men bring him their account books now and then. But at times his mind dwells on God also. It is like the case of a typhoid patient who is always in a delirium. Now and then he gets a flash of consciousness and cries out : ' I want a drink of water ! I want a drink of water ! ' But while you are giving him the water, he becomes unconscious again and is not aware of anything. I said to Captain, ' You are a ritualist.' He said : ' Yes, I feel very happy while performing worship and things like that. Worldly people have no other way.'

" I said to him : ' But must one perform formal worship for ever ? How long does a bee buzz about ? As long as it hasn't lighted on a flower. While sipping honey it doesn't buzz.' ' But ', he said, ' can we, like you, give up worship and other rituals ? ' Yet he doesn't always say the same thing. Sometimes he says that all this is inert, sometimes that all this is conscious. I say : ' What do you mean by inert ? Everything is Chaitanya, Consciousness.' "

Sri Ramakrishna asked M. about Purna.

MASTER : " If I see Purna once more, then my longing for him will diminish. How intelligent he is ! His mind is much drawn to me. He says, ' I too feel a strange sensation in my heart for you,' (To M.) They have taken him away from your school. Will that harm you ? "

M : " If Vidyasagar<sup>1</sup> tells me that Purna's relatives have taken him away from the school on my account, I have an explanation to give him."

MASTER : " What will you say ? "

M : " I shall say that one thinks of God in holy company. That is by no means bad. Further, I shall tell him that the text-books prescribed by the school authorities say that one should love God with all one's soul." (The Master laughs.)

MASTER : " At Captain's house I sent for the younger Naren. I said to him : ' Where is your house ? I want to see it.' ' Please do come ', he said. But he became nervous as we were going there, lest his father should know about it. (All laugh.)

(To a visitor) " You haven't been here for a long time—about seven or eight months."

<sup>1</sup> Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>2</sup> The founder of the school.

VISITOR : " About a year, sir."

MASTER : " Another gentleman used to come with you."

VISITOR : " Yes, sir. Nilmani Babu."

MASTER : " Why doesn't he come any more ? Ask him to come some time. I want to see him. Who is this boy with you ?"

VISITOR : " He comes from Assam."

MASTER : " Where is Assam ? In which direction ?"

Dwija spoke to the Master about Ashu. Ashu's father was arranging for his marriage, but Ashu had no wish to marry.

MASTER : " See, he doesn't want to marry. They are forcing him."

Sri Ramakrishna said to a devotee that he should show respect to his elder brother. He said : " The elder brother is like one's father. Respect him."

A pundit was sitting with the devotees. He came from upper India.

MASTER (*smiling to M.*) : " The pundit is a great student of the *Bhagavata*."

M. and the devotees looked at the pundit.

MASTER (*to the pundit*) : " Well, sir, what is Yogamaya ?"

The pundit gave some sort of explanation.

MASTER : " Why isn't Radhika called Yogamaya ?"

The pundit also answered this question after a fashion.

MASTER : " Radhika is full of unmixed sattva, the embodiment of prema. Yogamaya contains all the three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas ; but Radhika has nothing but pure sattva."

(*To M.*) " Narendra now respects Radhika very much. He says that if anyone wants to know how to love Satchidananda, he can learn it from her."

" Satchidananda wanted to taste divine bliss for Itself. That is why It created Radhika. She was created from the person of Satchidananda Krishna. Satchidananda Krishna is the 'container', and He Himself, in the form of Radhika, is the 'contained'. He manifested Himself in that way in order to taste His own bliss, that is to say, in order to experience divine bliss by loving Satchidananda."

" Therefore it is written in the Vaishnava books that after her birth Radhika did not open her eyes. The idea is that she did not wish to see any human being. Yasoda came with Krishna in her arms to see Radhika. Only then did she open her eyes, to behold Krishna. In a playful mood Krishna touched her eyes. (*To the Assamese boy*) Haven't you seen this ? Small children touch others' eyes with their hands."

The pundit was about to take leave of Sri Ramakrishna.

PUNDIT : " I must go home."

MASTER (*tenderly*) : " Have you earned anything ?"

PUNDIT : " The market is very dull. I've earned nothing."

A few minutes later he saluted the Master and departed.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " You see how great the difference is between worldly people and the youngsters ? This pundit has been worrying about money day and night. He has come to Calcutta to earn money ; otherwise his people



at home will have nothing to eat. So he has to knock at different doors. When will he concentrate his mind on God? But the youngsters are untouched by 'woman and gold'; hence they can direct their mind to God whenever they desire.

"The youngsters do not enjoy worldly people's company. Rakhal used to say, 'I feel nervous at the sight of the worldly-minded.' When I was first beginning to have spiritual experiences, I used to shut the doors of my room when I saw worldly people coming.

"As a boy, at Kamarpukur, I loved Ram Mallick dearly. But afterwards, when he came here, I couldn't even touch him. Ram Mallick and I were great friends during our boyhood. We were together day and night; we slept together. At that time I was sixteen or seventeen years old. People used to say, 'If one of them were a woman they would marry each other.' Both of us used to play at his house. I remember those days very well. His relatives used to come riding in palanquins. Now he has a shop at Chanak. I sent for him many a time; he came here the other day and spent two days. Ram said he had no children; he brought up his nephew, but the boy died. He told me this with a sigh; his eyes were filled with tears; he was grief-stricken for his nephew. He said further that since they had no children of their own, all his wife's affection had been turned to the nephew. She was completely overwhelmed with grief. Ram said to her: 'You are crazy. What will you gain by grieving? Do you want to go to Benares?' You see, he called his wife crazy. Grief for the boy totally 'diluted' him. I found he had no stuff in him. I couldn't touch him."

The brahmin lady still stood near the north door. She was a widow. Her only daughter had been married to a very aristocratic man, a landlord in Calcutta with the title of Raja. Whenever the daughter visited her she was escorted by liveried footmen. Then the mother's heart swelled with pride. Just a few days ago the daughter had died, and now she was beside herself with sorrow.

The brahmin lady listened to the account of Ram Mallick's grief for his nephew. For the last few days she had been running to the Master from her home at Baghbazar like an insane person. She was eager to know whether Sri Ramakrishna could suggest any remedy for her unquenchable grief. Sri Ramakrishna resumed the conversation.

MASTER: "A man came here the other day. He sat a few minutes and then said, 'Let me go and see the "moon-face" of my child.' I couldn't control myself and said: "So you prefer your son's "moon-face" to God's "moon-face"! Get out, you fool!"

(To M.) "The truth is that God alone is real and all else unreal. Men, universe, house, children—all these are like the magic of the magician. The magician strikes his wand and says: 'Come delusion! Come confusion!' Then he says to the audience, 'Open the lid of the pot; see the birds fly into the sky.' But the magician alone is real and his magic unreal. The unreal exists for a second and then vanishes.

"Siva was seated in Kailas. His companion Nandi was near Him. Suddenly a terrific noise arose. 'Revered Sir,' asked Nandi, 'what does that

mean ?' Siva said : 'Ravana is born. That is its meaning.' A few moments later another terrific noise was heard. 'Now what is this noise ?' Nandi asked. Siva said with a smile, 'Now Ravana is dead.' Birth and death are like magic : you see the magic for a second and then it disappears. God alone is real and all else unreal. Water alone is real ; its bubbles appear and disappear. They disappear into the very water from which they rise.

"God is like an ocean, and living beings are its bubbles. They are born there and they die there. Children are like the few small bubbles around a big one.

"God alone is real. Make an effort to cultivate love for Him and find out the means to realize Him. What will you gain by grieving ?"

All sat in silence. The brahmin lady said, "May I go home now ?" The Master said to her tenderly : "Do you want to go now ? It is very hot. Why now ? You can go later in a carriage with the devotees."

Because the day was so hot, a devotee gave the Master a new fan made of sandal-wood. He was very much pleased and said : "Good ! Good ! Om Tat Sat ! Kali !" First he fanned the pictures of the gods and goddesses, and then he fanned himself. He said to M. : "See ! Feel the breeze !" M. was highly pleased.

Captain arrived with his children.

Sri Ramakrishna said to Kishori, "Please show the temples to the children." He began to talk to Captain. M., Dwija, and the other devotees were sitting on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch, facing the north. He asked Captain to sit in front of him on the same couch.

MASTER : "I was telling the devotees about you—your devotion, worship, and arati."

CAPTAIN (*bashfully*) : "What do I know of worship and arati ? How insignificant I am !"

MASTER : "Only the ego that is attached to 'woman and gold' is harmful. But the ego that feels it is the servant of God does no harm to anybody. Neither does the ego of a child, which is not under the control of any guna. One moment children quarrel, and the next moment they are on friendly terms. One moment they build their toy houses with great care, and immediately afterwards they knock them down. There is no harm in the 'I-consciousness' that makes one feel oneself to be a child of God or His servant. This ego is really no ego at all. It is like sugar candy, which is not like other sweets. Other sweets make one ill ; but sugar candy relieves acidity. Or take the case of Om. It is unlike other sounds.

"With this kind of ego one is able to love Satchidananda. It is impossible to get rid of the ego. Therefore it should be made to feel that it is the devotee of God, His servant. Otherwise, how can one live ? How intense was the love of the gopis for Sri Krishna ! (*To Captain*) Please tell us something about the gopis. You read the *Bhagavata* so much."

CAPTAIN : "When Sri Krishna lived at Vrindavan, without any of His royal splendour, even then the gopis loved Him more than their own souls.

Therefore Sri Krishna said, 'How shall I be able to pay off my debt to the gopis, who surrendered to me their all—their bodies, minds, and souls?' "

Captain's words awakened intense love for Krishna in the Master's mind. He exclaimed, "Govinda! Govinda! Govinda!" and was about to go into an ecstatic mood. Captain was amazed and said: "How blessed he is! How blessed he is!"

Captain and the devotees watched this love-ecstasy of Sri Ramakrishna. They sat quietly gazing at him, awaiting his return to the consciousness of the world.

MASTER: "Tell us more."

CAPTAIN: "Sri Krishna is unattainable by the yogis, by yogis like you; but He can be attained by lovers like the gopis. How many years did the yogis practise yoga for His vision! Yet they did not succeed. But the gopis realized Him with such ease!"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Yes, He ate from the hands of the gopis, wept for them, played with them, and made many demands on them."

A DEVOTEE: "Bankim has written a life of Krishna."

MASTER: "He accepts Krishna but not Radhika."

CAPTAIN: "I see he doesn't accept Krishna's lila with the gopis."

MASTER: "I also hear that Bankim says that one needs passions such as lust."

A DEVOTEE: "He has written in his magazine that the purpose of religion is to give expression to our various faculties: physical, mental, and spiritual."

CAPTAIN: "I see. He believes that lust and so forth are necessary. But he doesn't believe that Sri Krishna could enjoy His sportive pleasure in the world, that God could incarnate Himself in a human form and sport in Vrindavan with Radha and the gopis."

MASTER (*smiling*): "But these things are not written in the newspaper. How could he believe them?"

"A man said to his friend, 'Yesterday, as I was passing through a certain part of the city, I saw a house fall with a crash.' 'Wait', said the friend. 'Let me look it up in the newspaper.' But this incident wasn't mentioned in the paper. Thereupon the man said, 'But the paper doesn't mention it.' His friend replied, 'I saw it with my own eyes.' 'Be that as it may,' said the man, 'I can't believe it as long as it isn't in the paper.'

"How can Bankim believe that God sports about as a man? He doesn't get it from his English education. It is very hard to explain how God fully incarnates Himself as man. Isn't that so? The manifestation of Infinity in this human body only three and a half cubits tall!"

CAPTAIN: "Krishna is God Himself. In describing Him we have to use such terms as 'whole' and 'part'."

MASTER: "Whole and part are like fire and its sparks. An Incarnation of God is for the sake of the bhaktas and not of the jnanis. It is said in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* that Rama alone is both the Pervading Spirit and everything pervaded. 'You are the Supreme Lord distinguished as the vachaka, the signifying symbol, and the vachya, the object signified.'"

CAPTAIN : "The 'signifying symbol' means the pervader, and the 'object signified' means the thing pervaded."

MASTER : "The pervader in this case is a finite form. It is God incarnating Himself as a human being."

Sri Ramakrishna was talking thus to Captain and the devotees when Jaygopal Sen and Trailokya of the Brahmo Samaj arrived. They saluted the Master and sat down. Sri Ramakrishna looked at Trailokya with a smile and continued the conversation.

MASTER : "It is on account of the ego that one is not able to see God. In front of the door of God's mansion lies the stump of ego. One cannot enter the mansion without jumping over the stump."

"There was once a man who had acquired the power to tame ghosts. One day, at his summons, a ghost appeared. The ghost said : 'Now tell me what you want me to do. The moment you cannot give me any work I shall break your neck.' The man had many things to accomplish, and he had the ghost do them all, one by one. At last he could find nothing more for the ghost to do. 'Now', said the ghost, 'I am going to break your neck.' 'Wait a minute', said the man. 'I shall return presently.' He ran to his teacher and said : 'Revered sir, I am in great danger. This is my trouble.' And he told his teacher his trouble and asked, 'What shall I do now ?' The teacher said : 'Do this. Tell the ghost to straighten this kinky hair.' The ghost devoted itself day and night to straightening the hair. But how could it make a kinky hair straight ? The hair remained kinky."

"Likewise, the ego seems to vanish this moment, but it reappears the next. Unless one renounces the ego, one does not receive the grace of God."

"Suppose there is a feast in a house and the master of the house puts a man in charge of the stores. As long as the man remains in the store-room, the master doesn't go there ; but when of his own will he renounces the store-room and goes away, then the master locks it and takes charge of it himself."

"A guardian is appointed only for a minor. A boy cannot safeguard his property ; therefore the king assumes responsibility for him. God does not take over our responsibilities unless we renounce our ego."

"Once Lakshmi and Narayana were seated in Vaikuntha, when Narayana suddenly stood up. Lakshmi had been stroking His feet. She said, 'Lord, where are You going ?' Narayana answered : 'One of My devotees is in great danger. I must save him.' With these words He went out. But He came back immediately. Lakshmi said, 'Lord, why have You returned so soon ?' Narayana smiled and said : 'The devotee was going along the road overwhelmed with love for Me. Some washermen were drying clothes on the grass and the devotee walked over the clothes. At this the washermen chased him and were going to beat him with their sticks. So I ran out to protect him.' 'But why have You come back ?' asked Lakshmi. Narayana laughed and said : 'I saw the devotee himself picking up a brick to throw at them. (All laugh.) So I came back.'

"I said to Keshab, 'You must renounce your ego.' Keshab replied, 'If I do, how can I keep my organization together ?'



"I said to him : 'How slow you are to understand ! I am not asking you to renounce the "ripe ego", the ego that makes a man feel he is a servant of God or His devotee. Give up the "unripe ego", the ego that creates attachment to "woman and gold". The ego that makes a man feel he is God's servant, His child, is the "ripe ego". It doesn't harm one.'"

TRAILOKYA : "It is very difficult to get rid of the ego. People only think they are free from it."

MASTER : "Gauri would not refer to himself as 'I' lest he should feel egotistic. He would say 'this' instead. I followed his example and would refer to myself as 'this' instead of 'I'. Instead of saying, 'I have eaten,' I would say, 'This has eaten.' Mathur noticed it and said one day : 'What is this, revered father ? Why should you talk that way ? Let them talk that way. They have their egotism. You are free from it ; you don't have to talk like them,'"

"I said to Keshab, 'Since the ego cannot be given up, let it remain as the servant, the servant of God.' Prahlada had two moods. Sometimes he would feel that he was God. In that mood he would say, 'Thou art verily I, and I am verily Thou.' But when he was conscious of his ego, he felt that God was Master and he was His servant. After a man is firmly established in the ideal of 'I am He,' he can live as God's servant. He may then think of himself as the servant of God."

(To Captain) "When a man attains the Knowledge of Brahman he shows certain characteristics. The *Bhagavata* describes four of them : the state of a child, of an inert thing, of a madman, and of a ghoul. Sometimes the knower of Brahman acts like a five-year-old child. Sometimes he acts like a madman. Sometimes he remains like an inert thing. In this state he cannot work ; he renounces all action. You may say that jnanis like Janaka were active. The truth is that people in olden times gave responsibility to their subordinate officers and thus freed themselves from worry. Further, at that time men possessed intense faith."

Sri Ramakrishna began to speak about the renunciation of action. But he also said that those who felt they must do their duties should do them in a detached spirit.

MASTER : "After attaining Knowledge one cannot do much work."

TRAILOKYA : "Why so, sir ? Payhari Baba was a great yogi and yet he reconciled people's quarrels, even lawsuits."

MASTER : "Yes, yes. That's true. Dr. Durgacharan was a great drunkard. He used to drink twenty-four hours a day. But he was precise in his actions ; he did not make any mistake in treating his patients. There is no harm in doing work after the attainment of bhakti. But it is very hard. One needs intense tapasya."

"It is God who does everything. We are His instruments. Some Sikhs said to me in front of the Kali temple, 'God is compassionate.' I said, 'To whom is He compassionate ?' 'Why, revered sir, to all of us', said the Sikhs. I said : 'We are His children. Does compassion to one's own children mean much ? A father must look after his children ; or do you expect the



people of the neighbourhood to bring them up ? ' Well, won't those who say that God is compassionate ever understand that we are God's children and not someone else's ? "

CAPTAIN : " You are right. They don't regard God as their own."

MASTER : " Should we not, then, address God as compassionate ? Of course we should, as long as we practise sadhana. After realizing God, one rightly feels that God is our Father or Mother. As long as we have not realized God, we feel that we are far away from Him, children of someone else."

" During the stage of sadhana one should describe God by all His attributes. One day Hazra said to Narendra : ' God is Infinity. Infinite is His splendour. Do you think He will accept your offerings of sweets and bananas or listen to your music ? This is a mistaken notion of yours.' Narendra at once sank ten fathoms. So I said to Hazra, ' You villain ! Where will these youngsters be if you talk to them like that ? ' How can a man live if he gives up devotion ? No doubt God has infinite splendour ; yet He is under the control of His devotees. A rich man's gate-keeper comes to the parlour where his master is seated with his friends. He stands on one side of the room. In his hand he has something covered with a cloth. He is very hesitant. The master asks him, ' Well, gate-keeper, what have you in your hand ? ' Very hesitantly the servant takes out a custard-apple from under the cover, places it in front of his master, and says, ' Sir, it is my desire that you should eat this.' The Master is impressed by his servant's devotion. With great love he takes the fruit in his hand and says : ' Ah ! This is a very nice custard-apple. Where did you pick it ? You must have taken a great deal of trouble to get it.'

" God is under the control of His devotees. King Duryodhana was very attentive to Krishna and said to Him, ' Please have your meal here.' But the Lord went to Vidura's hut. He was very fond of His devotees. He ate Vidura's simple rice and greens as if they were celestial food.

" Sometimes a perfect jnani behaves like a ghoul. He does not discriminate about food and drink, holiness and unholiness. A perfect knower of God and a perfect idiot have the same outer signs. A perfect jnani perhaps does not utter the mantras while bathing in the Ganges. While worshipping God, perhaps he offers all the flowers together at His feet. He doesn't utter the mantras, nor does he observe the rituals.

" A man cannot renounce action as long as he desires worldly enjoyment. As long as one cherishes a desire for enjoyment, one performs action.

" A bird sat absent-mindedly on the mast of a ship anchored in the Ganges. Slowly the ship sailed out into the ocean. When the bird came to its senses, it could find no shore in any direction. It flew toward the north hoping to reach land ; it went very far and grew very tired but could find no shore. What could it do ? It returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After a long while the bird flew away again, this time toward the east. It couldn't find land in that direction either ; everywhere it saw nothing but limitless ocean. Very tired, it again returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After resting a long while, the bird went toward the south, and then toward the west. When it found no sign of land in any direction, it came back and settled down on the

mast. It did not leave the mast again, but sat there without making any further effort. It no longer felt restless or worried. Because it was free from worry, it made no further effort."

CAPTAIN : " Ah, what an illustration ! "

MASTER : " Worldly people wander about to the four quarters of the earth for the sake of happiness. They don't find it anywhere ; they only become tired and weary. When through their attachment to ' woman and gold ' they only suffer misery, they feel an urge toward dispassion and renunciation. Most people cannot renounce ' woman and gold ' without first enjoying it. There are two sorts of people : those who stay in one place and those who go about to many places. There are some sadhakas who visit many sacred places. They cannot settle down in one spot ; they must drink the water of many holy places. Thus roaming about, they satisfy their unfulfilled desires. And at last they build a hut in one place and settle down there. Then, free from worry and effort, they meditate on God.

" But what is there to enjoy in the world ? ' Woman and gold ' ? That is only a momentary pleasure. One moment it exists and the next moment it disappears.

" The world is like an overcast sky that steadily pours down rain ; the face of the sun is seldom seen. There is mostly suffering in the world. On account of the cloud of ' woman and gold ' one cannot see the sun. Some people ask me : ' Sir, why has God created such a world ? Is there no way out for us ? ' I say to them : ' Why shouldn't there be a way out ? Take shelter with God and pray to Him with a yearning heart for a favourable wind, that you may have things in your favour. If you call on Him with yearning, He will surely listen to you.

" A man had a son who was on the point of death. In a frenzy he asked remedies of different people. One of them said : ' Here is a remedy : First it must rain when the star Svati is in the ascendant ; then some of the rain must fall into a skull ; then a frog must come there to drink the water, and a snake must chase it ; and when the snake is about to bite the frog, the frog must hop away and the poison must fall into the skull. You should give the patient a little of the poison and rain-water from the skull.' The father set out eagerly to find the medicine when the star Svati was in the sky. It started raining. Fervently he said to God, ' O Lord, please get a skull for me.' Searching here and there, he at last found a skull with rain-water in it. Again he prayed to God, saying, ' O Lord, I beseech Thee, please help me find the frog and the snake.' Since he had great longing, he got the frog and the snake also. In the twinkling of an eye he saw a snake chasing a frog, and as it was about to bite the frog, its poison fell into the skull. •

" If one takes shelter with God and prays to Him with great longing, God will surely listen ; He will certainly make everything favourable.

CAPTAIN : " What an apt illustration ! "

MASTER : " Yes, God makes everything favourable. Perhaps the aspirant doesn't marry. Thus he is able to devote his whole attention to God. Or perhaps his brothers earn the family's livelihood. Or perhaps a son takes on the

responsibilities of the family. Then the aspirant will not have to bother about the world; he can give one hundred per cent of his mind to God.

"But one cannot succeed unless one renounces 'woman and gold'. Only by renunciation is ignorance destroyed. The sun's rays, falling on a lens, burn many objects. But if a room is dark inside, you cannot get that result. You must come out of the room to use the lens.

"But some people live in the-world even after attaining jnana. They see both what is inside and what is outside the room. The light of God illumines the world. Therefore with that light they can discriminate between good and bad, permanent and impermanent. The ignorant, who lead a worldly life without knowing God, are like people living in a house with mud walls. With the help of a dim light they can see the inside of the house but nothing more. But those who live in the world after having attained Knowledge and realized God, are like people living in a glass house. They see the inside of the room and also all that is outside. The light from the sun of Knowledge enters strongly into the room. They perceive everything inside the room very clearly. They know what is good and what is bad, what is permanent and what is impermanent.

"God alone is the Doer, and we are all His instruments. Therefore it is impossible even for a jnani to be egotistic. The writer of a hymn to Siva felt proud of his achievement; but his pride was dashed to pieces when Siva's bull bared his teeth. He saw that each tooth was a word of the hymn. Do you understand the meaning of this? These words had existed from the beginningless past. The writer had only discovered them.

"It is not good to be a guru by profession. One cannot be a teacher without a command from God. He who says he is a guru<sup>6</sup> is a man of mean intelligence. Haven't you seen a balance? The lighter side goes higher. He who is spiritually higher than others does not consider himself a guru.<sup>7</sup> Everyone wants to be a teacher, but a disciple is hard to find."

Trailokya was seated on the floor, to the north of the small couch. He was going to sing. Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "Ah, how sweetly you sing!"

Trailokya sang to the accompaniment of a tanpura :

I have joined my heart to Thee : all that exists art Thou ;  
Thee only have I found, for Thou art all that exists.  
O Lord, Beloved of my heart ! Thou art the Home of all ;  
Where indeed is the heart in which Thou dost not dwell ?  
Thou hast entered every heart : all that exists art Thou.  
Whether sage or fool, whether Hindu or Mussalman,  
Thou makest them as Thou wilt : all that exists art Thou.

Thy presence is everywhere, whether in heaven or in Kaaba ;  
Before Thee all must bow, for Thou art all that exists.  
From earth below to the highest heaven, from heaven to deepest  
earth,

<sup>6</sup> The word means both "spiritual teacher" and "heaviness".

<sup>7</sup> The meaning is that if a man thinks of himself as "guru" he is "heavy" and goes down, like the heavier pan of a balance.

I see Thee wherever I look : all that exists art Thou.  
 Pondering, I have understood ; I have seen it beyond a doubt ;  
 I find not a single thing that may be compared to Thee.  
 To Jafar ' it has been revealed that Thou art all that exists.

He sang again :

Thou art my All in All, O Lord !—the Life of my life, the Essence  
 of essence ;

In the three worlds I have none else but Thee to call my own.

Thou art my peace, my joy, my hope ; Thou my support, my wealth,  
 my glory ;

Thou my wisdom and my strength.

Thou art my home, my place of rest ; my dearest friend, my next  
 of kin ;

My present and my future, Thou ; my heaven and my salvation.

Thou art my scriptures, my commandments ; Thou art my ever  
 gracious Guru ;

Thou the Spring of my boundless bliss.

Thou art the Way, and Thou the Goal ; Thou the Adorable One,  
 O Lord !

Thou art the Mother tender-hearted ; Thou the chastising Father ;

Thou the Creator and Protector ; Thou the Helmsman who dost  
 steer

My craft across the sea of life.

While Sri Ramakrishna listened to the songs he was overwhelmed with  
 emotion. Again and again he said : " Ah, Thou art all ! Ah me ! Ah me ! "

The music was over. It was six o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna  
 went to the pine-grove, M. accompanying him. Sri Ramakrishna was laughing  
 and talking. Suddenly he said to M. : ' Why haven't you eaten any refresh-  
 ments ? Why haven't the others eaten either ? ' He was eager for the devotees  
 to take some refreshments.

Sri Ramakrishna was to go to Calcutta in the evening. While returning  
 from the pine-grove he said to M., " I don't know who will take me to Calcutta  
 in his carriage."

It was evening. A lamp was lighted in Sri Ramakrishna's room and  
 incense was burnt. Lamps also were lighted in the different temples and  
 buildings. The orchestra was playing in the nahabat. Soon the evening service  
 would begin in the temples.

Sri Ramakrishna sat on the small couch. After chanting the names of  
 the different deities, he meditated on the Divine Mother. The evening service  
 was over. Sri Ramakrishna paced the room, now and then talking to the  
 devotees. He also consulted M. about his going to Calcutta.

Presently Narendra arrived. He was accompanied by Sarat and one or  
 two other young devotees. They all saluted the Master.

At the sight of Narendra Sri Ramakrishna's love overflowed. He tenderly  
 touched Narendra's chin as one touches a baby's to show one's love. He said  
 in a loving voice, " Ah, you have come ! "

\* The author of the song.

The Master was standing in his room, facing the Ganges. Narendra and his young friends were talking to him, facing the east. The Master turned toward M. and said : " Narendra has come. How can I go to Calcutta now ? I sent for Narendra. How can I go now ? What do you think ? "

M : " As you wish, sir. Let us put it off today. "

MASTER : " All right. We shall go tomorrow, either by boat or by carriage. (*To the other devotees*) It is late. Go home now. "

One by one the devotees saluted him and departed.



## XLII

### CAR FESTIVAL AT BALARAM'S HOUSE

*Monday, July 13, 1885*

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting in Balaram's drawing-room with the devotees. It was nine o'clock in the morning. Balaram was going to celebrate the Car Festival the following day. The Deity Jagannath<sup>1</sup> was worshipped daily at his house. He had a small car which would be drawn along the verandah to celebrate the festival. The Master had been specially invited for the occasion.

Sri Ramakrishna and M. were talking together. Narayan, Tejchandra, Balaram, and other devotees were in the room. The Master was talking about Purna, a lad of fifteen. He was very eager to see the boy.

MASTER (*to M.*) : "Well, by which road will he come to see me ? Please have Purna and Dwija meet each other.

"When two people are of the same age and have the same inner nature, I bring them together. There is a meaning in this. In this way both make progress. Have you noticed Purna's longing for God ?"

M : "Yes, sir. One day I was riding on a tram. He saw me from the roof of his house and ran down to the street. With great fervour he saluted me from the street."

MASTER (*with tears in his eyes*) : "Ah ! Ah ! It is because you have helped him make the contact through which he will find out the supreme ideal of his life. One doesn't act like that unless one longs for God."

"Narendra, the younger Naren, and Purna—these three have a manly nature. It is not so with Bhavanath. He has a womanly nature.

"Purna is in such an exalted state that either he will very soon give up his body—the body is useless after the realization of God—or his inner nature will within a few days burst forth.

"He has a divine nature—the traits of a god. It makes a person less fearful of men. If you put a garland of flowers round his neck or smear his body with sandal-paste or burn incense before him, he will go into samadhi ; for then he will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Narayana Himself dwells in his body, that it is Narayana who has assumed the body. I have come to know about it.

<sup>1</sup> The name of Krishna as He is worshipped in Puri ; literally, "Lord of the Universe".

"A few days after my first experience of the God-intoxicated state at Dakshineswar, a lady of a brahmin family arrived there. She had many good traits. No sooner was a garland put round her neck and incense burnt before her than she went into samadhi. A few moments later she experienced great bliss; tears streamed from her eyes. I saluted her and said, 'Mother, shall I succeed?' 'Yes', she replied.

"I want to see Purna once more. But how will it be possible for me? It seems he is a part.' How amazing! Not a mere particle, but a part. Very intelligent, too. I understand that he is very clever in his studies. Therefore I have hit it right.

"By dint of austerity, a man may obtain God as his son. By the roadside on the way to Kamarpukur is Ranjit Raya's lake. Bhagavati, the Divine Mother, was born as his daughter. Even now people hold an annual festival there in the month of Chaitra, in honour of this divine daughter. I feel very much like going there.

"Ranjit Raya was the landlord of that part of the country. Through the power of his tapasya he obtained the Divine Mother as his daughter. He was very fond of her, and she too was much attached to him; she hardly left his presence. One day Ranjit Raya was engaged in the duties of his estate. He was very busy. The girl, with her childlike nature, was constantly interrupting him, saying: 'Father, what is this? What is that?' Ranjit Raya tried, with sweet words, to persuade her not to disturb him, and said: 'My child, please leave me alone. I have much work to do.' But the girl would not go away. At last, absent-mindedly, the father said, 'Get out of here!' On this pretext she left home. A pedlar of conch-shell articles was going along the road. From him she took a pair of bracelets for her wrists. When he asked for the price, she said that he could get the money from a certain box in her home. Then she disappeared. Nobody saw her again. In the mean time the pedlar came to the house and asked for the price of his bracelets. When she was not to be found at home, her relatives began to run about looking for her. Ranjit Raya sent people in all directions to search for her. The money owed to the pedlar was found in the box, as she had indicated. Ranjit Raya was weeping bitterly, when people came running to him and said that they had noticed something in the lake. They all ran there and saw an arm, with conch-shell bracelets on the wrist, being waved above the water. A moment afterwards it disappeared. Even now people worship her as the Divine Mother at the time of the annual festival. (To M.) All this is true."

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "Narendra now believes these things.

"Purna was born with an element of Vishnu. I worshipped him mentally with bel-leaves; but the offering was not accepted. Then I worshipped him with tulsi-leaves and sandal-paste.<sup>3</sup> That proved to be all right. God reveals Himself in many ways: sometimes as man, sometimes in other

<sup>2</sup> A part of the Divine Incarnation.

<sup>3</sup> The leaves of the bel-tree are offered to Siva, whereas tulsi-leaves and sandal-paste are offered to Vishnu.

divine forms made of Spirit. One must believe in divine forms. What do you say ? ”

M : “ It is true, sir.”

MASTER : “ The brahmani of Kamarhati<sup>1</sup> sees many visions. She lives all by herself in a lonely room in a garden on the bank of the Ganges. She spends her time in japa. Gopala<sup>2</sup> sleeps with her. (*The Master gives a start.*) It is not imagination, but fact. She saw that Gopala's palms were red. He walks with her. She suckles Him at her breast. They talk to each other. When Narendra heard the story he wept. Formerly I too used to see many visions, but now in my ecstatic state I don't see so many. I am gradually getting over my feminine nature ; I feel nowadays more like a man. Therefore I control my emotion ; I don't manifest it outwardly so much.

“ The younger Naren has the nature of a man. Therefore in meditation his mind completely merges in the Ideal. He does not show emotion. Nityagopal has a feminine nature. Therefore while he is in a spiritual mood his body becomes distorted and twisted ; it becomes flushed.

(*To M.*) “ Well, people renounce grain by grain, but what a mood these youngsters are in !

“ Binode said : ‘ I have to sleep with my wife. That makes me feel very bad.’ It is bad for an aspirant to sleep with his wife, whether he has intercourse with her or not. There is the friction of the body and also the physical warmth.

“ What a state Dwija is passing through ! In my presence he only sways his body and fixes his glance on me. Is that a trifling thing ? If a man gathers his whole mind and fixes it on me, then, indeed, he achieves everything.

“ But what am I ? It is all He. I am the machine and He is its Operator. It is God alone who exists in this [meaning his body]. That is why so many people are feeling more and more attracted to it. A mere touch is enough to awaken their spirituality. This attraction, this pull, is the attraction of God and of none else.

“ Tarak of Belgharia was going home from Dakshineswar. I clearly noticed that a flame-like thing came out of this [meaning his body] and followed him. A few days later Tarak came back to Dakshineswar. In a state of samadhi He who dwells in this body placed His foot on Tarak's chest.

“ Well, are there more youngsters like these ? ”

M : “ Mohit is very nice. He came to you once or twice. He is studying enough books to pass two university examinations. He has great longing for God.”

MASTER : “ That may be. But he doesn't belong to a high plane. His physical traits are not so good ; he has a puggish face. But these other youngsters belong to a high plane.

“ Many troubles and worries follow in the wake of a birth in a physical body. Further, if a person is cursed, he may have to be born seven times. One must be very careful. One has to assume a human body if one cherishes the slightest desire.”

<sup>1</sup> Referring to one of the Master's woman devotees known as Gopal Ma.

<sup>2</sup> The Baby Krishna.

A DEVOTEE : "What are the desires of those who are Incarnations of God ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "I find that I have not got rid of all my desires. Once I saw a holy man with a shawl, and I too wanted to put on one like it. Even now I have that desire. I don't know whether I shall have to be born again for it."

BALARAM (*smiling*) : "Then will you be born again just for a shawl ?" (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*) : "One has to keep a good desire so that one may give up the body meditating on it. There are four holy places for the sadhus to visit. They visit three and leave out one. Many of them leave out Puri, the place of Jagannath, so that they can give up their bodies meditating on Jagannath."

A man dressed in an ochre robe entered the room and greeted the Master. Privately he was in the habit of criticizing Sri Ramakrishna ; so at the sight of him Balaram laughed. Sri Ramakrishna could read a man's mind. He said to Balaram : "Never mind. Let him say I am a cheat."

Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Tejchandra.

MASTER : "I send for you so often. Why don't you come ? If you practise meditation and prayer it will make me happy. I look on you as my own ; that is why I send for you."

TEJCHANDRA : "Sir, I have to go to the office. I am very busy with my duties."

M. (*smiling*) : "There was a marriage ceremony at his home and he got leave from his office for ten days."

MASTER : "Well, well ! You say you have no leisure. You told me just now that you were going to renounce the world."

NARAYAN : "M. said to us one day that this world is a wilderness."

MASTER (*to M.*) : "Please tell them that story of the disciple who became unconscious after taking the medicine. His teacher arrived at the house and said he would revive if someone else swallowed a pill that he would prescribe. The disciple would get back his life, but the man who swallowed the pill would die."

"Please tell the other one, too, of the hathayogi who thought that his wife and children were his very own, and who feigned death with his limbs stretched out. It will do them good to hear those stories."

It was noon. Sri Ramakrishna partook of the food that had been offered to the Family Deity, Jagannath. The Master often used to say that the food at Balaram's house was very pure. Afterwards he rested awhile.

Late in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna sat with the devotees in the drawing-room of Balaram's house. Chandra Babu, of the Kartabhaja sect, and a witty brahmin were there. The brahmin was something of a buffoon ; his words made everybody laugh.

About six o'clock Girish's brother Atul and Tejchandra's brother arrived. Sri Ramakrishna was in samadhi. A few minutes later he said, still in the ecstatic mood : "Can one become unconscious by meditating on

Consciousness ? Can one lose one's mind by thinking of God ? God is of the very nature of Knowledge ; He is of the very nature of Eternity, Purity, and Consciousness."

Sri Ramakrishna said to the witty brahmin : " Why do you waste your time with these frivolous jokes about insignificant worldly things ? Direct your mind to God. If a man can calculate about salt, he can also calculate about sugar candy."

BRAHMIN (*smiling*) : " Please attract me."

MASTER : " What can I do ? Everything depends on your effort. Your mind is your own. Give up this trifling buffoonery and go forward toward God. You can go farther and farther along that way. The brahmachari asked the wood-cutter to go forward. At first the wood-cutter found a sandal-wood forest ; next, a silver-mine ; next, a gold-mine ; and then gems and diamonds."

BRAHMIN : " There is no end to this path."

MASTER : " Where you find peace, there is the end."

About a new visitor Sri Ramakrishna said : " I didn't find any substance in him. He seemed worthless."

It was dusk. Lamps were lighted in the room. Sri Ramakrishna was meditating on the Divine Mother and chanting Her name in his melodious voice. The devotees sat around him. Since Balaram was going to celebrate the Car Festival at his house the following day, Sri Ramakrishna intended to spend the night there.

After taking some refreshments in the inner apartments, Sri Ramakrishna returned to the parlour. It was about ten o'clock. The Master said to M., " Please bring my towel from the other room."

A bed was made for Sri Ramakrishna in the adjoining small room. About half past ten Sri Ramakrishna lay down to sleep. It was summertime. He said to M., " You had better bring a fan." He asked the disciple to fan him. At midnight Sri Ramakrishna woke up. He said to M., " Don't fan me any more : I feel chilly."

*Tuesday, July 14, 1885*

It was the day of the Car Festival. Sri Ramakrishna left his bed very early in the morning. He was alone in the room, dancing and chanting the name of God. M. entered and saluted the Master. Other devotees arrived one by one. They saluted the Master and took seats near him. Sri Ramakrishna was longing intensely for Purna. He was talking to M. about him.

MASTER : " Did you give Purna any instruction ?"

M : " I asked him to read the life of Chaitanya. He is familiar with the incidents of his life. I told him further that you ask people to stick to the truth."

MASTER : " How did he take it when you said about me, ' He is an Incarnation of God ' ?"

M : " I said to him, ' Come with me if you want to see a person like Chaitanya.'"

MASTER : " Anything else ?"





M : "Also that remark of yours that when an elephant enters a small pool there is a great splashing of water all around ; likewise, in the case of a 'small receptacle', emotion overflows.

"About his giving up of fish, I said to him : 'Why have you done that ? Your family will make a great fuss about it.'"

MASTER : "That's good. One should keep one's feelings and emotions to oneself."

It was about half past six in the morning. M. was going to bathe in the Ganges, when suddenly tremors of an earthquake were felt. At once he returned to Sri Ramakrishna's room. The Master stood in the drawing-room. The devotees stood around him. They were talking about the earthquake. The shaking had been rather violent, and many of the devotees were frightened.

M : "You should all have gone downstairs."

MASTER : "Such is the fate of the house under whose roof one lives ; and still people are so egotistic. (*To M.*) Do you remember the great storm of the month of Aswin ?"

M : "Yes, sir. I was very young at that time—nine or ten years old. I was alone in a room while the storm was raging, and I prayed to God."

M. was surprised and said to himself : "Why did the Master suddenly ask me about the great storm of Aswin ? Does he know that I was alone at that time earnestly praying to God with tears in my eyes ? Does he know all this ? Has he been protecting me as my guru since my very birth ?"

MASTER : "It was quite late in the day at Dakshineswar when the storm broke, but somehow they managed to cook the meals. The trees were uprooted. You see, this is the fate of the house one lives in.

"But when one attains Perfect Knowledge, then one finds that dying and killing are one and the same thing ; that is to say, both are unreal. When one is dead, one has not really died ; and when one has killed another, the man is not really dead. Both the Lila and the Nitya belong to the same Reality. In one form It is the Absolute, and in the another, the Lila. Even though the Lila is destroyed, the Nitya always exists. Water is water, whether it is still or in waves ; it is the same water when the waves quiet down."

Sri Ramakrishna sat in the drawing-room with the devotees. Mahendra Mukherji, Hari, the younger Naren, and many other devotees were there. Hari lived alone and studied Vedanta. He was about twenty-three years old, and unmarried. Sri Ramakrishna was very fond of him. He wanted Hari to visit him frequently. But since Hari loved solitude he did not often come to the Master.

MASTER (*to Hari*) : "Well, I haven't seen you for a long time.

"You see, in one form He is the absolute and in another He is the Relative. What does Vedanta teach ? Brahman alone is real and the world illusory isn't that so ? But as long as God keeps the 'ego of a devotee' in a man, the Relative is also real. When He completely effaces the ego, then what *is* remains. That cannot be described by the tongue. But as long as God keeps the ego, one must accept all. By removing the outer sheaths of the plantain-tree, you reach the inner pith. As long as the tree contains sheaths, it also contains pith.

So too, as long as it contains pith, it also contains sheaths. The pith goes with the sheaths and the sheaths go with the pith. In the same way, when you speak of the Nitya, it is understood that the Lila also exists; and when you speak of the Lila, it is understood that the Nitya also exists.

"It is He alone who has become the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is actionless, I call Him Brahman; when He creates, preserves, and destroys, I call Him Sakti. Brahman and Sakti are not different from each other. Water is water, whether it is still or moving.

"It is not possible to rid oneself of 'I-consciousness'. And as long as one is aware of this 'I-consciousness', one cannot speak of the universe and its living beings as unreal. You cannot get the correct weight of the bel-fruit if you leave out its shell and pits.

"The brick, lime, and brick-dust of which the stairs are made are the same brick, lime, and brick-dust of which the roof is made. The universe and its living beings exist on account of the Reality of Him who is known as Brahman.

"The devotees—I mean the vijñānis—accept both God with form and the Formless, both the Personal God and the Impersonal. In a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—visible blocks of ice are formed here and there by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep love of Its worshipper, the Infinite reduces Itself to the finite and appears before the worshipper as God with form. Again, as, on the rising of the sun, the ice melts away, so, on the awakening of Knowledge, God with form melts away into the same Infinite and Formless.

"As long as a man analyses with the mind, he cannot reach the Absolute. As long as you reason with your mind, you have no way of getting rid of the universe and the objects of the senses—form, taste, smell, touch, and sound. When reasoning stops, you attain the Knowledge of Brahman. Atman cannot be realized through this mind; Atman is realized through Atman alone. Pure Mind, Pure Buddhi, Pure Atman—all these are one and the same.

"Just think how many things you need to perceive an object. You need eyes; you need light; you need mind. You cannot perceive the object if you leave out any one of these three. As long as the mind functions, how can you say that the universe and the 'I' do not exist?

"When the mind is annihilated, when it stops deliberating pro and con, then one goes into samādhi, one attains the Knowledge of Brahman. You know the seven notes of the scale: sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. One cannot keep one's voice on 'ni' very long."

Looking at the younger Naren, Sri Ramakrishna said: "What will you gain by merely being intuitively aware of God's existence? A mere vision of God is by no means everything. You have to bring Him into your room. You have to talk to Him.

"Some have heard of milk, some have seen milk, and some have drunk milk. Some have seen the king, but only one or two can bring the king home and entertain him."

M. went to the Ganges to take his bath. It was ten o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna was still talking with the devotees. After finishing his bath, M. returned to Balaram's house. He saluted the Master and sat down near him.

Sri Ramakrishna was filled with intense spiritual fervour. Words of wisdom flowed from him. Now and then he narrated his profound mystical experiences to the devotees.

MASTER : " I went to Benares with Mathur Babu. Our boat was passing the Manikarnika Ghat on the Ganges, when suddenly I had a vision of Siva. I stood near the edge of the boat and went into samadhi. The boatman, fearing that I might fall into the water, cried to Hriday : ' Catch hold of him ! Catch hold of him ! ' I saw Siva standing on that ghat, embodying in Himself all the seriousness of the world. At first I saw Him standing at a distance ; then I saw Him approaching me. At last He merged in me.

" Another time, in an ecstatic mood, I saw that a sannyasi was leading me by the hand. We entered a temple and I had a vision of Annapurna made of gold.

" God alone has become all this ; but He manifests Himself more in certain things than in others.

(To M.) " Perhaps you do not believe in the salagram. ' Englishmen ' do not believe in it. It doesn't matter whether you believe in it or not. A salagram should contain the mark of a disc and other signs ; only then can it be worshipped as an emblem of God."

M : " Yes, sir. It is like the fuller manifestation of God in a man with good physical traits."

MASTER : " At first Narendra used to say that these were figments of my imagination ; but now he accepts everything."

Sri Ramakrishna was describing the vision of God, when he went into samadhi. The devotees looked at him with fixed gaze. After a long time he regained consciousness of the world and talked to the devotees.

MASTER (to M.) " What do you think I saw ? I saw the whole universe as a salagram, and in it I saw your two eyes."

In silent wonder M. and the devotees listened to these words about his inner experience. At this moment Sarada, another young disciple of the Master, entered the room and saluted him.

MASTER (to Sarada) : " Why don't you come to Dakshineswar ? Why don't you see me when I come to Calcutta ? "

SARADA : " Nobody tells me about it."

MASTER : " Next time I shall let you know. (To M., smiling) Make a list of these youngsters." (M. and the devotees laugh.)

SARADA : " My relatives at home want me to marry. (Pointing to M.) How many times he has scolded me about marriage ! "

MASTER : " Why should you marry just now ? (To M.) Sarada is now in a very good state of mind. Formerly he had a hesitant look ; now his face beams with joy."

Sri Ramakrishna said to a devotee, " Will you kindly fetch Purna ? "

Narendra arrived. Sri Ramakrishna asked a devotee to give him some refreshments. He was greatly pleased at the sight of Narendra. When he

fed Narendra, he felt that he was feeding Narayana Himself. He stroked Narendra's body affectionately.

Gopal Ma entered the room. She was a great devotee of Gopala and was blessed with many lofty spiritual visions. Sri Ramakrishna had asked Balaram to send a man to bring her from Kamarhati. As soon as she entered the room she said, "I am shedding tears of joy." With these words she bowed before the Master, touching the ground with her forehead.

MASTER : "What is this ? You address me as 'Gopala' and still you salute me ! Now go into the inner apartments and cook some curry for me. Put some spicy seasoning in it so that I may get the smell from here." (*All laugh.*)

GOPAL MA : "What will they [meaning the members of the household] think of me ?"

Before she left the room she said to Narendra in a very fervent voice, "My child, have I reached the goal, or have I farther to go ?"

It was the day of the Car Festival ; so there was some delay in the worship of the Family Deity. When the worship was finished Sri Ramakrishna was asked to have his meal. He went to the inner apartments. The woman devotees were anxious to see him.

Sri Ramakrishna had many woman devotees, but he did not talk much about them to his man devotees. He would warn the men against visiting woman devotees. He would say : "Don't overdo it. Otherwise you will slip." To some of his man devotees he would say, "Don't go near a woman even if she rolls on the ground with devotion." The Master wanted the men to live apart from woman devotees ; only thus would the two groups make progress. He did not like the woman devotees to caress the men as "Gopala" ; for too much of this motherly affection was not good ; it degenerated in time into a harmful relationship.

After his midday meal Sri Ramakrishna sat in the drawing-room with the devotees. It was one o'clock. A devotee brought Purna from his home. With great joy the Master exclaimed to M. : "Here he is ! Purna has come." Narendra, the younger Naren, Narayan, Haripada, and other devotees were talking with the Master.

THE YOUNGER NAREN : "Sir, have we any free will ?"

MASTER : "Just try to find out who this 'I' is. While you are searching for 'I', 'He' comes out. 'I am the machine and He is the Operator.' You have heard of a mechanical toy that goes into a store with a letter in its hand. You are like that toy. God alone is the Doer. Do your duties in the world as if you were the doer, but knowing all the time that God alone is the Doer and you are the instrument.

"As long as the upadhi exists there is ignorance. 'I am a scholar', 'I am a jnani', 'I am wealthy', 'I am honourable', 'I am the master, father, and teacher'—all these ideas are begotten of ignorance. 'I am the machine and You are the Operator'—that is Knowledge. In the state of Knowledge all upadhis are destroyed. When the log is burnt up entirely, there is no more sound ; no heat either. Everything cools down. Peace ! Peace ! Peace ! (*To Narendra*) Sing a little."



NARENDRA : " I must go home. I have many things to do."

MASTER : " Yes, yes, my child ! Why should you listen to us ? ' The words of those who have gold in their ears are valuable ; no one listens to him who hasn't even a rag round his waist.' (*All laugh.*) You frequent the garden house of the Guhas. I always hear about it. Whenever I ask, ' Where is Narendra today ? ' I am told, ' Oh, he has gone to the Guhas.' I should not have said all these things, but you have wrung them out of me."

Narendra kept quiet a few moments. Then he said : " There are no instruments to accompany me. Shall I just sing ?"

MASTER : " My child, this is all we have. Please sing if it suits you. You must know how Balaram arranges things."

" Balaram says to me, ' Please come to Calcutta by boat ; take a carriage only if you must.' (*All laugh.*) You see, he has given us a feast today ; so this afternoon he will make us all dance ! (*All laugh.*) One day he hired a carriage for me from here to Dakshineswar. He said that the carriage hire was twelve annas. I said to him, ' Will the coachman take me to Dakshineswar for twelve annas ? ' ' Oh, that will be plenty', he replied. One side of the carriage broke down before we reached Dakshineswar. (*All laugh.*) Besides, the horse stopped every now and then ; it simply would not go. Once in a while the coachman whipped the horse, and then it ran a short distance. (*All laugh.*) The program for the evening is that Ram will play on the drum and we shall all dance. Ram has no sense of rhythm. (*All laugh.*) Anyhow, that is Balaram's attitude—sing yourselves, dance yourselves, and make yourselves happy !" (*All laugh.*)

Other devotees were arriving. Mahendra Mukherji saluted the Master from a distance. The Master returned the salute. Then he salaamed to Mahendra like a Mussalman. The Master said to a young devotee who sat next to him : " Why don't you tell him I have salaamed to him ? He will appreciate it." (*All laugh.*)

Many of the householder devotees were accompanied by their wives and other woman relatives. They wanted to salute the Master and watch his dancing before the car. Ram, Girish, and other devotees gradually assembled. Many young devotees were present.

Narendra sang :

Oh, when will dawn the blessed day  
When Love will waken in my heart ?  
When will my tears flow uncontrolled  
As I repeat Lord Hari's name,  
And all my longing be fulfilled ?  
When will my mind and soul be pure ?  
Oh, when shall I at last repair  
Unto Vrindavan's sacred groves ?  
When will my worldly bonds fall off  
And my imperfect sight be healed  
By Wisdom's cool collyrium ?

When shall I learn true alchemy  
And, touching the Philosopher's Stone,  
Transmute my body's worthless iron  
Into the Spirit's purest gold ?



When shall I see this very world  
As God, and roll on Love's highway ?  
When shall I give up piety  
And duty and the thought of caste ?  
When shall I leave behind all fear,  
All shame, convention, worry, pride ?

Oh, I shall smear my body then  
With dust from the feet of devotees ;  
Across my shoulders I shall sling  
Renunciation's pack, and drink  
From my two hands a cooling draught  
Of Jamuna's life-renewing stream.  
Oh, then I shall be mad with love ;  
I shall both laugh and weep for joy !  
Then I shall swim upon the Sea  
Of blessed Satchidananda ;  
Drunk with His love, I shall make all  
As drunk as I ! Oh, I shall sport  
At Hari's feet for evermore !

He sang again :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;  
Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave. . . .

Balaram had arranged for kirtan with Vaishnavcharan, the musician.  
Vaishnavcharan sang :

O tongue, always repeat the name of Mother Durga !  
Who but your Mother Durga will save you in distress ? . . .

When Sri Ramakrishna had heard a line or two of the song he went into samadhi. He stood up in that ecstatic mood. The younger Naren supported him. The Master's face was lighted with a smile. Gradually his body became motionless ; his mind appeared to have gone to another realm. All the devotees in the room looked at him in amazement. The woman devotees watched the scene from behind the screen. After a long time he came down from samadhi, chanting the holy name of God.

As the Master sat down, Vaishnavcharan sang again :

O vina, sing Lord Hari's name !  
Without the blessing of His feet  
You cannot know the final Truth.  
The name of Hari slays all grief ;  
Sing Hari's name ! Sing Krishna's name ! . . .

Then he sang :

O vina, forgetting to worship Hari,  
I pass the days of my life in vain. . . .

It was afternoon. In the mean time the small car of Jagannath, decorated with flowers, flags, and bunting, had been brought to the inner verandah. The images of Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balarama, were adorned with sandal-paste, flower garlands, robes, and jewelry. Sri Ramakrishna left the room where the professional musicians were singing and came to the verandah,

accompanied by the devotees. He stood in front of the car and pulled it by the rope. He began to sing and dance with the devotees in front of the car.

The Master sang :

Behold, the two brothers<sup>6</sup> have come, who weep while chanting  
Hari's name. . . .

He sang again :

See how all Nadia is shaking  
Under the waves of Gauranga's love ! . . .

The music and dancing went on in the verandah as the car was pulled to and fro. A large crowd entered the house on hearing the loud music and the beating of the drums. Sri Ramakrishna was completely intoxicated with divine love. The devotees felt its contagion and danced with the Master in an ecstasy of love.

Afterwards Sri Ramakrishna returned to the drawing-room. M. and other devotees stroked his feet.

Filled with divine fervour, Narendra sang to the accompaniment of the tanpura :

Come ! Come, Mother ! Doll of my soul ! My heart's Delight !  
In my heart's lotus come and sit, that I may see Thy face. . . .

Then he sang :

Mother, Thou art our sole Redeemer,  
Thou the Support of the three gunas,  
Higher than the most high.  
Thou art compassionate, I know,  
Who takest away our bitter grief.

Sandhya art Thou, and Gayatri ;  
Thou dost sustain this universe.  
Mother, the Help art Thou  
Of those that have no help but Thee,  
O Eternal Beloved of Siva !

Thou art in earth, in water Thou ;  
Thou liest at the root of all.  
In me, in every creature,  
Thou hast Thy home ; though clothed with form,  
Yet art Thou formless Reality.

He sang another song :

I have made Thee, O Lord, the Pole-star of my life ;  
No more shall I lose my way on the world's trackless sea.  
Wherever I wander here, Thy brilliance shines undimmed ;  
With Thy serene and gracious light  
Thou drivest all the tears out of my troubled soul.

In my heart's inmost shrine Thy face for ever beams ;  
If, for a moment even, I cannot find it there,  
My soul is overwhelmed with woe ;  
And when my witless mind strays from the thought of Thee,  
The vision of Thy face strikes me with deepest shame.

<sup>6</sup> Gauranga and Nityananda.

A devotee said to Narendra, "Will you sing that one—'O Mother, Thou my Inner Guide, ever awake within my heart'?"

MASTER: "Oh, no! Why that song now? The proper thing now is to sing of divine bliss—a song like 'O Mother Syama, full of the waves of drunkenness divine'."

Narendra sang:

O Mother Syama, full of the waves of drunkenness divine!  
Who knows how Thou dost sport in the world?  
Thy fun and frolic and Thy glances put to shame the god of love.  
O Wielder of the sword! O Thou of terrifying face!  
The earth itself is shaken under Thy leaps and strides!  
O Thou Abode of the three gunas! O Redeemer! Fearsome One!  
Thou who art the Consort of Siva!  
Many the forms Thou dost assume, fulfilling Thy bhaktas' prayers.  
Thou dancest in the Lotus of the Heart,  
O Mother, Eternal Consort of Brahman!

Full of divine ecstasy, Narendra sang again and again the lines:

Thou dancest in the Lotus of the Heart,  
O Mother, Eternal Consort of Brahman!

Sri Ramakrishna was dancing, drunk with divine love, and he sang again and again, "O Mother, Eternal Consort of Brahman!"

After dancing a long time Sri Ramakrishna resumed his seat. He was very much pleased to see Narendra in a spiritual mood, singing with tears in his eyes.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The devotees still sat around the Master. Vaishnavcharan sang about Gauranga:

The beautiful Gauranga, the youthful dancer, fair as molten gold. . .

Next he sang about Sri Krishna. Krishna had left His pastoral life in Vrindavan and become the king of Mathura. A gopi met Him there and said:

O Hari, how shall we know You now?  
In Mathura's royal splendour You have forgotten us.  
Now, in Your kingly robes, You ride an elephant;  
Have You utterly forgotten how in Vrindavan You tended cows?  
O Hari, have You forgotten how You would steal the butter  
From Braja's innocent gopi maids?

About eleven o'clock the devotees saluted the Master and were departing one by one.

MASTER: "You may all go. (*Pointing to Narendra and the younger Naren*) It will be enough if these two stay. (*To Girish*) Will you eat your supper at home? You may stay a few minutes if you want to. You want a smoke! But Balaram's servant is just like his master. Ask him for a smoke; he won't give it! (*All laugh.*) But don't go away without having your smoke."

Girish had brought with him a bespectacled friend. The latter observed all these things and left the place. Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish: "I say

this to you and to everyone. Please do not force anybody to come here. Nothing happens except at the right time."

Before leaving, a devotee saluted the Master. He had a young boy with him. Sri Ramakrishna said to him affectionately, "It is getting late, and you have this boy with you." Narendra, the younger Naren, and a few other devotees stayed awhile and then took their leave.

*Wednesday, July 15, 1885*

It was four o'clock in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna was in bed in the small room next to the drawing-room. M. was sitting on a bench on the outer verandah to the south of the room. A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna came out to the verandah. M. saluted him.

MASTER: "I have already been up once. Well, shall we go to Dakshineswar this morning?"

M: "The Ganges is less choppy in the morning."

Day was gradually breaking. The devotees had not yet arrived. Sri Ramakrishna had washed his mouth and was chanting the names of God in his sweet voice. He stood near the north door of the room. M. was by his side. A few minutes later Gopal Ma arrived and stood near him. One or two woman devotees were looking at the Master from behind the doors of the inner apartments. They were like the gopis of Vrindavan looking at Sri Krishna, or the woman devotees of Nadia looking at Gauranga from behind the screen.

After chanting the name of Rama, Sri Ramakrishna chanted the name of Krishna: "Krishna! Krishna! Krishna of the gopis! Gopi! Gopi! Krishna, the Life of the cowherd boys of Vrindavan! Krishna, the son of Nanda! Govinda! Govinda!"

Next he chanted the name of Gauranga. Then he repeated, "Alekh Niranjana", which is a name of God. Saying, "Niranjana", he wept. The devotees wept too. With tears in his eyes the Master said: "O Niranjan! O my child! Come! Eat this! Take this! When shall I make my life blessed by feeding you? You have assumed this human form for my sake."

He prayed to Jagannath in a very touching voice: "O Jagannath, Lord of the Universe! O Friend of the world! O Friend of the poor! I am not, O Lord, outside Thy universe. Be gracious to me!"

While he sang in praise of Jagannath he was beside himself with divine love.

Now he chanted the name of Narayana. He danced and sang: "O Narayana! O Narayana! Narayana! Narayana!"

He danced and sang again:

Ah, friend! I have not found Him yet, whose love has driven me mad. . . .

Afterwards the Master sat in the small room with the devotees. He was completely stripped of his clothes, like a five-year-old child. M., Balaram, and a few other devotees were in the room.

MASTER: "One can see God's form. One sees God when all upadhis disappear and reasoning stops. Then a man becomes speechless and goes into

samadhi. Coming to the theatre, people indulge in all kinds of gossip. But the moment the curtain goes up, all conversation stops ; the spectators become fully absorbed in what they see on the stage.

"I want to tell you something very secret. Why do I love boys like Purna and Narendra so much ? Once, in a spiritual mood, I felt intense love for Jagannath, love such as a woman feels for her sweetheart. In that mood I was about to embrace Him, when I broke my arm. It was then revealed to me : 'You have assumed this human body. Therefore establish with human beings the relationship of friend, father, mother, or son.'

"I now feel for Purna and the other young boys as I once felt for Ramlala.<sup>7</sup> I used to bathe Ramlala, feed Him, put Him to bed, and take Him wherever I went. I used to weep for Ramlala. Now I have the same feeling for these young boys. Look at Niranjana. He is not attached to anything. He spends money from his own pocket to take poor patients to the hospital. At the proposal of marriage he says, 'Goodness ! That is the whirlpool of the Visalakshi !'<sup>8</sup> I see him seated on a light.

"Purna belong to the realm of the Personal God. He was born with an element of Vishnu. Ah, what yearning he has !

(To M.) "Didn't you notice that he looked at you as if you were his spiritual brother, his very own ? He said he would visit me again, at Captain's house.

"Narendra belongs to a very high plane—the realm of the Absolute. He has a manly nature. So many devotees come here, but there is not one like him.

"Every now and then I take stock of the devotees. I find that some are like lotuses with ten petals, some like lotuses with sixteen petals, some like lotuses with a hundred petals. But among lotuses Narendra is a thousand-petalled one.

"Other devotees may be like pots or pitchers ; but Narendra is a huge water-barrel.

"Others may be like pools or tanks ; but Narendra is a huge reservoir like the Haldarpukur.

"Among fish, Narendra is a huge red-eyed carp ; others are like minnows or smelts or sardines. Tarak of Belgharia may be called a bass.

"Narendra is a 'very big receptacle', one that can hold many things. He is like a bamboo with a big hollow space inside.

"Narendra is not under the control of anything. He is not under the control of attachment or sense pleasures. He is like a male pigeon. If you hold a male pigeon by its beak, it breaks away from you ; but the female pigeon keeps still. Narendra has the nature of a man ; so he sits on the right side in a carriage. Bhavanath has a woman's nature ; so I make him sit on the other side. I feel great strength when Narendra is with me in a gathering."

About eight o'clock in the morning Mahendra Mukherji arrived and saluted the Master. Haripada, Tulsiram, and other devotees arrived one by one and saluted him. Baburam was laid up with fever and could not come.

<sup>7</sup> A name of the Boy Rama. See foot-note, p. 670.

<sup>8</sup> A stream near Kamarpukur.



MASTER (to M. and the others) : "Hasn't the younger Naren come ? Perhaps he thought I had left. (To Mukherji) How amazing ! Even during his boyhood, on returning from school, he cried for God. Is it a small thing to cry for God ? He is very intelligent, too. He is like a bamboo with a big hollow space inside. All of his mind is fixed on me. Girish Ghosh said to me : 'The younger Naren went to Navagopal's house when a kirtan was going on. On entering the house he inquired about you and exclaimed, "Where is he ?" He was totally unconscious of his surroundings and practically walked over the people.' He has no fear of his relatives' threats. Sometimes he spends three nights at a stretch at Dakshineswar."

MUKHERJI : "Hari" became simply speechless at what you said yesterday. He said to me : 'Such wisdom can be found only in the philosophical systems of Samkhya, Yoga, and Vedanta. He is no ordinary person.'"

MASTER : "But I have never studied Samkhya or Vedanta.

"Perfect jnana and perfect bhakti are one and the same thing. A man reasons, saying, 'Not this, not this'; he rejects the unreal. When his reasoning comes to an end, he attains the Knowledge of Brahman. Then he accepts what he rejected before. A man carefully climbs to the roof, rejecting the steps one by one. After reaching the roof he realizes that the steps are made of the same materials as the roof, namely, brick, lime, and brick-dust.

"He who is aware of the high is also aware of the low. After the attainment of Knowledge one looks alike on high and low.

"While Prahlada dwelt on the plane of the Supreme Reality, he maintained the attitude of 'I am He'; but when he climbed down to the physical plane, he would look on himself as the servant of God.

"Hanuman also sometimes said, 'I am He', sometimes, 'I am the servant of God', sometimes, 'I am a part of God.'

"Why should a man cherish love of God in his heart ? How else will he live ? How else will he spend his days ?

"To be sure, the ego does not disappear altogether. As long as the pot of 'I'<sup>10</sup> persists, one cannot realize 'I am He.' In samadhi the ego totally disappears ; then what *is* remains. Ramprasad says : 'O Mother, when I shall attain Knowledge, then You alone will know whether I am good or You are good.'

"As long as 'I-consciousness' exists, one should have the attitude of a bhakta ; one should not say, 'I am God.' A man aware of his body should feel that he is not Krishna Himself, but His devotee. But if God draws the devotee to Himself, then it is different. It is like the master saying to his beloved servant : 'Come, take your seat near me. You are the same as I.'

"The waves are part of the Ganges, but the Ganges is not part of the waves.

"Siva experiences two states of mind. When He is completely absorbed in His own Self, He feels, 'I am He.' In that union neither body nor mind functions. But when He is conscious of His separate ego, He dances, exclaiming, 'Rama ! Rama !'

<sup>9</sup> Later Hari embraced the monastic life and became known as Swami Turiyananda.

<sup>10</sup> Body-consciousness.

"That which is unmoving also moves. Just now you are still, but a few moments later the same you will be engaged in action.

"Jnana and bhakti are one and the same thing. The difference is like this : one man says 'water', and another, 'a block of ice'.

"Generally speaking there are two kinds of samadhi. First, sthira or jada samadhi : one attains it by following the path of knowledge—as a result of the destruction of the ego through reasoning. Second, bhava samadhi : one attains this by following the path of bhakti. In this second samadhi a trace of ego remains, like a line, in order to enable the devotee to enjoy God, to taste His lila. But one cannot understand all this if one is attached to 'woman and gold'.

"I said to Kedar, 'You will never succeed if your mind dwells on "woman and gold".' I wanted to pass my hand over his chest, but I could not. He has knots and twists inside. It was like a room smelling of filth, which I could not enter. His attachment to the world is very deep ; it is like a natural emblem of Siva, whose root spreads as far as Benares. One will never succeed if one is attached to the world—to 'woman and gold'.

"The youngsters are yet untouched by 'woman and gold'. That is why I love them so dearly. Hazra says to me, 'You love a boy if he comes from a wealthy family or if he is handsome.' If that is so, then why do I love Harish, Latu, and Narendra ? Narendra hasn't a penny to buy salt to season his rice.

"The youngsters' minds are not yet coloured by worldliness. That is why they are so pure in heart. Besides, many of them are eternally perfect ; they have been drawn to God from their very birth. It is like a garden in which, while cleaning it, you suddenly discover water-pipes. The water gushes forth without any effort on your part."

BALARAM : "Sir, how was it possible for Purna to know all of a sudden that the world is illusory ?"

MASTER : "He has inherited that knowledge from his previous births. In his past lives he practised many disciplines. It is the body alone that is small or grows big, and not the Atman.

"Do you know what these youngsters are like ? They are like certain plants that grow fruit first and then flowers. These devotees first of all have the vision of God ; next they hear about His glories and attributes ; and at last they are united with Him. Look at Niranjana. He always keeps his accounts clear. He will be able to go whenever he hears the call. But one should look after one's mother as long as she is alive. I used to worship my mother with flowers and sandal-paste. It is the Mother of the Universe who is embodied as our earthly mother.

"As long as you look after your own body, you must look after your mother too. Therefore I said to Hazra : 'When you have a cold, you procure black pepper, sugar candy, and salt. As long as you feel you must look after your body, you must look after your mother too.'

"But it is quite different when you completely forget your body. Then God Himself assumes your responsibilities. A minor cannot look after himself ;

therefore a guardian is appointed for him. Chaitanyadeva, like a minor, could not look after himself."

M. went to the Ganges to bathe.

Sri Ramakrishna was talking with the devotees in the small room in Balaram's house. Mahendra, Balaram, Tulasi, Haripada, Girish, and other devotees were sitting on the floor. M. returned from the Ganges. After saluting the Master he took a seat near him. Sri Ramakrishna was recounting to the devotees some of his spiritual experiences.

MASTER: "One day in the Kali temple Haladhari and Nangta were reading the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Suddenly I had a vision of a river with woods on both sides. The trees and plants were green. Rama and Lakshmana were walking along wearing their shorts. One day, in front of the kuthi, I saw Arjuna's chariot. Sri Krishna was seated in it as the charioteer. I still remember it. Another day, while listening to kirtan at Kamarpukur, I saw Gauranga in front of me.

"At that time a naked person, emerging from my body, used to go about with me. I used to joke with him. He looked like a boy and was a paramahansa. I can't describe to you all the divine forms I saw at that time. I was suffering then from indigestion, which would become worse when I saw visions; so I would try to shun these divine forms and would spit on the ground when I saw them. But they would follow me and obsess me like ghosts. I was always overwhelmed with divine ecstasy and couldn't tell the passing of day and night. On the day after such a vision I would have a severe attack of diarrhoea, and all these ecstasies would pass out through my bowels."

GIRISH (*smiling*): "I am examining your horoscope."

MASTER (*smiling*): "I was born on the second day of the bright fortnight of the moon. My horoscope shows the positions of the sun, the moon, and Mercury at the time of my birth. There are not many more details."

GIRISH: "You were born under Kumbha. Rama and Krishna were born under Karkata and Vrisha, and Chaitanya under Simha."<sup>11</sup>

MASTER: "I had two desires: first, that I should be the king of the devotees, and second, that I should not be a dry sadhu."

GIRISH (*smiling*): "Why did you have to practise spiritual discipline?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "Even the Divine Mother had to practise austere sadhana to obtain Siva as Her husband. She practised the panchatapa. She would also immerse Her body in water in wintertime, and look fixedly at the sun. Krishna Himself had to practise much sadhana. I had many mystic experiences, but I cannot reveal their contents. Under the bel-tree I had many flaming visions. There I practised the various sadhanas prescribed in the Tantra. I needed many articles—human skulls, and so forth and so on. The Brahmani used to collect these things for me. I practised a number of mystic postures.

"I had another strange experience: if I felt egotistic on a particular day, I would be sick the following day."

<sup>11</sup> Kumbha, Karkata, Vrisha, and Simha are signs of the Hindu zodiac corresponding to Aquarius, Scorpio, Taurus, and Leo.

M. sat motionless as a picture on canvas, hearing about these unique visions of the Master. The other devotees also were spellbound. There was a dead silence in the room.

TULASI (*pointing to M.*) : " He never laughs."

MASTER : " But he laughs inside. The surface of the river Phalgu is covered with sand ; but if you dig into the sand, water comes up.

(*To M.*) " Don't you scrape your tongue ? Scrape it every day."

BALARAM : " Well, Purna has heard much about you from M."

MASTER : " Perhaps the account of my early spiritual experiences."

BALARAM : " If Purna is perfect by nature, then what is M.'s function ?"

MASTER : " A mere instrument."

It was nine o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna was about to leave for Dakshineswar. Arrangements were being made for his departure. A boat had been hired at Baghbazar. The devotees saluted the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna went to the boat with one or two devotees. Gopal Ma accompanied them. She intended to spend the morning at Dakshineswar and go to Kamarhati in the afternoon. The camp cot generally used by Rakhal at Dakshineswar had been sent to Calcutta for repair. It was put in the boat, and the boat left for Dakshineswar.

According to the Hindu almanac the day was not auspicious. So Sri Ramakrishna decided to return to Balaram's house the next Saturday and start again for Dakshineswar on an auspicious day.

## XLIII

### VISIT TO NANDA BOSE'S HOUSE

*Tuesday, July 28, 1885*

IT WAS ABOUT THREE O'CLOCK in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in Balaram's drawing-room with the devotees. Among others, Binode, Rakhal, the younger Naren, and M. were present. The Master had come to Balaram's house in the morning and had taken his midday meal there. At Balaram's house the Deity was worshipped as Jagannath, and the members of the family partook of the food offered to the Deity. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the food at Balaram's house was very pure.

Narayan and certain other devotees had remarked to the Master that Nanda Bose, an aristocrat of Baghbazar, had many pictures of gods and goddesses in his house. Hence Sri Ramakrishna intended to pay a visit to Nanda's house in the afternoon. A brahmin woman devoted to the Master lived near by. She often came to see him at Dakshineswar. She was extremely sorrowful over the death of her only daughter, and the Master had agreed to go to her house. She had invited him with great earnestness. From her house the Master was to go to the house of Ganu's mother, another devotee.

The younger Naren had said to Sri Ramakrishna that he would not be able to visit him often on account of his having to prepare for his examinations.

MASTER (*to the younger Naren*) : " I didn't send for you today."

THE YOUNGER NAREN (*smiling*) : " What can be done about it now ? "

MASTER : " Well, my child, I don't want to interfere with your studies. You may visit me when you have leisure."

The Master said these words as if he were piqued.

He was ready to go to Nanda Bose's house. A palanquin was brought for him, and he got into it repeating the name of God. He had put on a pair of black varnished slippers and a red-bordered cloth. As Sri Ramakrishna sat down in the palanquin, M. put the slippers by his side. He accompanied the palanquin on foot. Paresh joined them.

They entered the gate of Nanda's house, crossed the spacious square, and stopped in front of the building. The members of the family greeted the Master. He asked M. to hand him the slippers and then got out of the palanquin and entered the large hall. It was a very spacious room. Pictures of gods and goddesses were hanging on all sides.



Nanda Bose and his brother Pasupati saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The devotees of the Master also arrived. Girish's brother Atul came, and Prasanna's father, who was a frequent visitor at Nanda's house, was there. Prasanna was a devotee of the Master.

The Master looked at the pictures. M. and a few other devotees stood around him. Pasupati was explaining the pictures to them.

The first picture was of Vishnu with four arms. At the very sight of it Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed with ecstasy ; he sat down on the floor and remained a few minutes in that spiritual mood.

In the second picture Rama was blessing Hanuman, with His hand on the devotee's head. Hanuman's gaze was fixed on Rama's Lotus Feet. The Master looked at the picture a long time and exclaimed with great fervour, " Ah me ! Ah me ! "

The third picture was of Krishna standing with flute to His lips under the kadamba tree.

The fourth was of Vamana, the Dwarf, who was an Incarnation of Vishnu. The Master looked intently at this picture.

Next the Master looked at a picture of Nrisimha,<sup>1</sup> and then at one of Krishna with a herd of cows. Krishna was tending the cows with His cowherd friends on the bank of the Jamuna at Vrindavan. M. said, " A lovely picture ! "

Sri Ramakrishna then saw pictures of Dhumavati, Shodasi, Bhuvanesvari, Tara, and Kali. He said : " All these portray the terrible aspects of the Divine Mother. If one keeps these pictures, one should worship them. But you must be lucky, to be able to hang them like that on the wall. "

At the sight of Annapurna's picture, Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed with great fervour, " Grand ! Grand ! "

The next picture was one of Radhika as monarch. She was seated on a throne in the nikunja grove, surrounded by her woman attendants. Sri Krishna guarded the entrance of the grove as her officer.

Next was Sri Krishna's picture. Then came a picture of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and music. It was in a glass case. She was in an ecstatic mood, playing melodies on the vina.

After seeing the pictures, Sri Ramakrishna went to the master of the house and said : " I am very happy today. It is grand ! You are a real Hindu. You have these pictures instead of English ones. I am surprised ! "

Nanda Bose was seated. He said to the Master : " Please take a seat. Why are you standing ? "

Sri Ramakrishna sat down. He said : " These are very large pictures. You are a real Hindu. "

NANDA : " I have European pictures also. "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " They are not like these. I am sure you don't pay much attention to them. "

A picture of Keshab's Navavidhan hung on the wall. Suresh Mitra, a beloved householder disciple of the Master, had had it painted. In this picture

<sup>1</sup> God incarnated as half lion and half man to protect Prahlada and destroy the demon Hiranyakasipu, his father.

Sri Ramakrishna was pointing out to Keshab that people of different religions proceed to the same goal by different paths.

MASTER : " That was painted for Surendra."

PRASANNA'S FATHER (*smiling*) : " You too are in that picture."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Yes, it contains everything. This is the ideal of modern times."

As he spoke Sri Ramakrishna manifested great spiritual fervour. He was in an ecstatic mood, talking to the Divine Mother. A few minutes later he said, like a drunkard, " I am not unconscious." Looking at the house, he said : " It is a huge mansion. But what does it consist of ? Bricks, timber, and clay."

A little later he said, " I am very happy to see these pictures of gods and goddesses." He added : " It is not good to keep pictures of the terrible aspects of the Divine Mother. If one does, one should worship them."

PASUPATI (*smiling*) : " Well, things will go on as long as She keeps them going."

MASTER : " That is true. But one should think of God. It is not good to forget Him."

NANDA : " But how little we think of God !"

MASTER : " One thinks of God through His grace."

NANDA : " But how can we obtain God's grace ? Has He really the power to bestow grace ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : " I see. You think as the intellectuals do : one reaps the results of one's actions. Give up these ideas. The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with flowers in my hand : ' Here, Mother, take Thy sin ; here, take Thy virtue. I don't want either of these ; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy good ; here, take Thy bad. I don't want any of Thy good or bad ; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma ; here, take Thy adharma. I don't want any of Thy dharma or adharma ; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy knowledge ; here, take Thy ignorance. I don't want any of Thy knowledge or ignorance ; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy purity ; here, take Thy impurity. Give me only real bhakti.'"

NANDA : " Can God violate law ?"

MASTER : " What do you mean ? He is the Lord of all. He can do everything. He who has made the law can also change it.

" But you may very well talk that way. Perhaps you want to enjoy the world, and that is why you talk that way. There is a view that a man's inner spirit is not awakened unless he is through with enjoyment. But what is there to enjoy ? The pleasures of ' woman and gold ' ? This moment they exist and the next moment they disappear. It is all momentary. And what is there in ' woman and gold ' ? It is like the hog plum—all stone and skin. If one eats it, one suffers from colic. Or like a sweetmeat. Once you swallow it, it is gone."

Nanda remained silent a few minutes. Then he said : " Oh, yes. People no doubt talk that way. But is God partial ? If things happen through God's grace, then I must say God is partial."

MASTER : " But God Himself has become everything—the universe and its living beings. You will realize it when you have Perfect Knowledge. God Himself has become the twenty-four cosmic principles : the mind, intellect, body, and so forth. Is there anyone but Himself to whom He can show partiality ? "

NANDA : " Why has He assumed all these different forms ? Why are some wise and some ignorant ? "

MASTER : " It is His sweet will. "

ATUL : " Kedar Babu puts it nicely. Once a man asked him, ' Why has God created the world ? ' He replied, ' I was not present at the conference where God made the plans of His creation. ' "

MASTER : " Oh ! It is His sweet will. "

So saying, the Master sang :

O Mother, all is done after Thine own sweet will ;  
Thou art in truth self-willed, Redeemer of mankind !  
Thou workest Thine own work ; men only call it theirs.  
Thou it is that holdest the elephant in the mire ;  
Thou, that helpst the lame man scale the loftiest hill.  
On some Thou dost bestow the bliss of Brahmanhood ;  
Yet others Thou dost hurl into this world below.  
Thou art the Moving Force, and I the mere machine ;  
The house am I, and Thou the Spirit dwelling there ;  
I am the chariot, and Thou the Charioteer :  
I move alone as Thou, O Mother, movest me.

He continued : " The Divine Mother is full of bliss. Creation, preservation, and destruction are the waves of Her sportive pleasure. Innumerable are the living beings. Only one or two among them obtain liberation. And that makes Her happy.

Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free ;  
And Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, O Mother, watching them !

Some are being entangled in the world and some are being liberated from it.

How many are the boats, O mind,  
That float on the ocean of this world !  
How many are those that sink ! "

NANDA : " It may be Her sweet will : but it is death to us. "

MASTER : " But who are you ? It is the Divine Mother who has become all this. It is only as long as you do not know Her that you say, ' I ', ' I '.

" All will surely realize God. All will be liberated. It may be that some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, and some in the evening ; but none will go without food. All, without any exception, will certainly know their real Self. "

PASUPATI : " True, sir. It seems that it is God alone who has become everything. "

MASTER : " Try to find out what this 'I' is. Is this 'I' the bones or flesh or blood or intestines ? Seeking the 'I', you discover 'Thou'. In other words, nothing exists inside you but the power of God. There is no 'I', but only 'He'. (To *Pasupati*) You have so much wealth, but you have no egotism. It is not possible to rid oneself altogether of the ego ; so, as long as it is there, let the rascal remain as the servant of God. (*All laugh.*) The ego that makes a man feel he is a devotee of God or a son of God or a servant of God is good. But the ego that makes a man attached to 'woman and gold' is the 'unripe ego'. That ego is to be renounced."

The head of the household and the others were very much pleased to hear this interpretation of the ego.

MASTER (to *Pasupati*) : " There are two signs of knowledge : first, absence of pride, and second, a peaceful nature. You have both. Therefore you must have received the grace of God."

" Too much wealth makes one forget God. That is the very nature of wealth. *Jadu Mallick* has become very rich. Nowadays he doesn't talk of God. Formerly he used to enjoy spiritual talk a great deal."

" 'Woman and gold' is a kind of wine. If a man drinks too much wine, he does not show his father and uncle the respect that is due to them. Very often he abuses them. A drunkard cannot distinguish between his superior and his inferior."

NANDA : " That is true, sir."

PASUPATI : " Sir, what do you think of Theosophy and Spiritualism ? Are these true ? What do you think of the solar plane, the lunar plane, the stellar plane ?"

MASTER : " My dear sir, I don't know about these things. Why bother about them so much ? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Enjoy them. What is the use of your calculating how many mango-trees there are, how many millions of branches, how many billions of leaves ? I have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Let me enjoy them."

" Once a man's inner spirit is awakened, once he succeeds in knowing God, he doesn't feel the desire even to know about all this rubbish. How incoherently a delirious patient talks : 'I shall eat five seers of rice ! I shall drink a whole tank of water !' 'Will you ?' says the physician. 'All right ! You will have them.' Saying this, the physician goes on with his smoke. But he pays attention to what the patient says when the patient is no longer delirious."

PASUPATI : " Will our delirium last for ever ?"

MASTER : " Why should you think so ? Fix your mind on God, and spiritual consciousness will be awakened in you."

PASUPATI (smiling) : " Our union with God is only momentary. It doesn't last any longer than a pipeful of tobacco." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER : " What if that is so ? Union with God even for one moment surely gives a man liberation."

" Ahalya said to Rama, 'O Rama, it doesn't matter if I am born as a pig or any other being ; only bless me that my mind may dwell on Thy Lotus Feet and be filled with real devotion to Thee.'"

"Narada said to Rama : 'O Rama, I want from Thee no other favour. Please give me real love for Thee ; and please bless me, that I may not come under the spell of Thy world-bewitching maya.'

"When a man sincerely prays to God, he is able to fix his mind on God and develop real love for His Lotus Feet.

"Give up all such notions as : 'Shall we be cured of our delirium ?', 'What will happen to us ?', 'We are sinners !' (*To Nanda*) One must have this kind of faith : 'What ? Once I have uttered the name of Rama, can I be a sinner any more ?'"

NANDA : "Is there no after-life ? What about punishment for our sins ?"

MASTER : "Why not enjoy your mangoes ? What need have you to calculate about the after-life and what happens then, and things like that ? Eat your mangoes. You need mangoes. You need devotion to God—"

NANDA : "But where is the mango-tree ? Where do I get mangoes ?"

MASTER : "Tree ? God is the eternal and infinite Brahman. He *does* exist ; there is no doubt about it. He is eternal. But you must remember this, that He is the Kalpataru.

Come, let us go for a walk, O mind, to Kali, the Wish-fulfilling Tree,

And there beneath It gather the four fruits of life.

"You must go to the Kalpataru and pray. Only then will you obtain the fruits. Only then will the fruits fall from the tree. Only then will you be able to gather them. There are four fruits : dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. The jnanis seek the fruit of liberation ; and the bhaktas, love of God, love without any motive behind it. They seek neither dharma nor artha nor kama.

"You ask about the after-life. According to the *Gita* you will become in the next life what you think of in the hour of death. King Bharata was very much grieved over his pet deer ; he died repeating the word 'deer' ; therefore he was reborn as a deer. That is why day and night a man should practice worship, japa, meditation, and other spiritual exercises. Only then, by virtue of practice, will he be able to think of God in the hour of death. If one dies thus, thinking of God, one will acquire God's nature.

"Keshab Sen, too, asked me about the after-life. I said to him also, 'What need have you of all these calculations ?' Then I said : 'As long as a man does not realize God, he will return to the world. The potter puts his clay jars and lids out in the sun to bake. If cattle trample them underfoot, he throws away the baked ones. But he collects the soft ones, mixes them with more clay, puts them on the wheel, and makes new vessels from them.'"

The master of the house had not yet shown any sign of serving Sri Ramakrishna with refreshments. Sri Ramakrishna himself said to Nanda : "You see, you should offer me something to eat. That is why the other day I said to Jadu's mother : 'Look here. Give me something to eat.' Otherwise it brings harm to the householder."

Nanda Bose ordered some sweets. Sri Ramakrishna began to eat them. Nanda and the others were watching the Master and his action. After eating



the sweets, Sri Ramakrishna wanted to wash his hands. The plate on which the sweets were served had been placed on the sheet covering the carpet ; so the Master could not wash his hands in the plate. A servant brought a brass bowl for him to use. But Sri Ramakrishna would not use it, since only rajasic people used such things. He asked the servant to take it away. The master of the house said to him, "Please wash your hands." Absent-mindedly Sri Ramakrishna said : "What ? Shall I wash my hands ?"

The Master walked to the south verandah. He asked M. to pour water into his hands. M. poured water from a jug. The Master dried his hands with his cloth and returned to the room. Then he was offered betel-leaf on a tray. But the other guests had already taken some from the same tray ; the Master did not accept any.

NANDA (*to the Master*) : "May I say something ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "What ?"

NANDA : "Why didn't you eat any betel-leaf ? Everything else you did was proper ; this alone seems to be otherwise."

MASTER : "Before I eat anything I offer it to God.<sup>2</sup> It is a notion of mine."

NANDA : "But the betel-leaf would have gone to God all the same."

MASTER : "There is the path of jnana, and there is also the path of bhakti. According to the jnani everything can be eaten by applying the Knowledge of Brahman ;<sup>3</sup> but the follower of bhakti keeps a little distinction."<sup>4</sup>

NANDA : "But I still maintain that you did not act rightly."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "It is just a notion of mine. What you say is also right. That too is supported by the scriptures."

Sri Ramakrishna was warning Nanda of flatterers.

MASTER : "Beware of flatterers. They are after their own selfish purpose. (*To Prasanna's father*) Do you live in this house ?"

PRASANNA'S FATHER : "No, sir, I am a neighbour. Won't you have a smoke ?"

MASTER (*very humbly*) : "No, please enjoy yourself. I don't feel like smoking now."

Nanda's house was like a palace. Sri Ramakrishna said to him : "Jadu hasn't such a big house. I told him so the other day."

NANDA : "He has built a new house at Jorashanko."

Sri Ramakrishna was encouraging Nanda.

MASTER (*to Nanda*) : "Though you are a householder, still you have kept your mind on God. Is that a small thing ? The man who has renounced the world will pray to Him as a matter of course. Is there any credit in that ? But blessed indeed is he who, while leading a householder's life, prays to God. He is like a man who finds an object after removing a stone weighing twenty maunds."

<sup>2</sup> According to Hindu religious custom a thing can be offered to God only if no part of it has been eaten by anyone else beforehand.

<sup>3</sup> The jnani sees everything as Brahman ; therefore he does not distinguish between holy and unholy.

<sup>4</sup> Between holy and unholy.

"One should pray to God, establishing with Him an appropriate relationship. Hanuman's love for God was mixed with knowledge ; but Narada's love for God was pure and unadulterated.

"Rama asked Hanuman, 'Hanuman, what attitude do you cherish toward Me when you worship Me ?' Hanuman answered : 'Sometimes I see that You are the whole and I am a part ; sometimes I see that You are the Master and I am Your servant. But Rama, when I have the Knowledge of Reality, then I find that You are I and I am You.'

"Rama said to Narada, 'Ask a favour of Me.' Narada said, 'O Rama, grant me the boon that I may have genuine love for Thy Lotus Feet and that I may not come under the spell of Thy world-bewitching maya !'"

Sri Ramakrishna was about to take his leave.

MASTER (to Nanda) : "According to the *Gita* a man who is honoured and respected by many people possesses a special power of God. You have divine power."

NANDA : "All men have the same power."

MASTER (sharply) : "You all say the same thing. Can all men ever possess power to the same degree ? God no doubt dwells in all beings as the all-pervading Spirit, but the manifestations of His Power are different in different beings.

"Vidyasagar, too, said the same thing. He said, 'Has God given some more power and some less ?' Thereupon I said to him : 'If there are not different manifestations of His Power, then why have we come to see you ? Have you grown two horns on your head ?'"

Sri Ramakrishna rose. The devotees followed him. Pasupati accompanied them to the door.

The Master arrived at the house of the brahmin lady who was grief-stricken on account of her daughter's death. It was an old brick house. Entering the house, the Master passed the cow-shed on his left. He and the devotees went to the roof, where they took seats. People were standing there in rows. Others were seated. They were all eager to get a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna.

The brahmani had a sister ; both of them were widows. Their brothers also lived in the house with their families. The brahmani had been busy all day making arrangements to receive Sri Ramakrishna. While the Master was at Nanda Bose's house she had been extremely restless, going out of the house every few minutes to see if he was coming. He had promised to come to her place from Nanda's. Because of his delay she had thought perhaps he would not come at all.

Sri Ramakrishna was seated on a carpet. M., Narayan, Jogin, Devendra, and others were seated on a mat. A few minutes later the younger Naren and some other devotees arrived. The brahmani's sister came to the Master and saluted him. She said : "Sister has just gone to Nanda Bose's house to inquire the reason for your delay in coming here. She will return presently."

A sound was heard downstairs and she exclaimed, "There she comes !" She went down. But it was not the brahmani.

Sri Ramakrishna sat there smiling, surrounded by devotees.

M. (to Devendra) : "What a grand sight ! All these people—young and old, men and women—standing in lines, eager to have a glimpse of him and hear his words."

DEVENDRA (to the Master) : "M. says that this place is better than Nanda's. The devotion of these people is amazing."

Sri Ramakrishna laughed.

The brahmani's sister exclaimed, "Here comes sister !"

The brahmani came and saluted the Master. She was beside herself with joy. She did not know what to say. In a half-choked voice she said : "This joy is too much for me. Perhaps I shall die of it. Tell me, friends, how shall I be able to live ? I did not feel such a thrill even when Chandi, my daughter, used to visit the house accompanied by liveried footmen, with armed guards lining both sides of the street. Oh ! Now I have no trace of my grief at her death. I was afraid he' would not come. Then I thought that, if that happened, I should throw into the Ganges all the things I had arranged for his reception and entertainment. I should not speak to him any more. If he visited a place, I should go there, look at him from a distance, and then come away.

"Let me go and tell everybody how happy I am. Let me go and tell Yogin of my good luck."

Still overwhelmed with joy she said : "A labourer won a hundred thousand rupees in a lottery. The moment he heard the news he died of joy. Yes, he really and truly died. I am afraid the same thing is going to happen to me. Please bless me, friends, or else I shall certainly die."

M. was amazed to see the brahmani's sincere joy and her ecstatic mood. He was about to take the dust of her feet. "What are you doing ?" she exclaimed and saluted M.

The brahmani was extremely happy at the sight of the devotees. She said : "I am so happy to see you all here. I have brought the younger Naren ; without him, who would there be to make us laugh ?"

She was talking like this when her sister came up and said : "Come down, sister ! How can I manage things if you stay here ? Can I do it all by myself ?"

But the brahmani was overwhelmed with joy. She could not take her eyes from the Master and the devotees.

After a while she very respectfully took Sri Ramakrishna to another room and offered him sweets and other refreshments. The devotees were entertained on the roof.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna was ready to leave. When he came to the door, the brahmani asked her sister-in-law to salute the Master. Next, one of her brothers took the dust of the Master's feet. Referring to him, she said : "He is one of my brothers. He is a fool." "No no !" said the Master. "They are all good."

A man showed the way with a light. At places it was dark. Sri Ramakrishna stood in front of the cow-shed. The devotees gathered around

<sup>2</sup> Meaning Sri Ramakrishna.

him. M. saluted the Master, who was about to go to the house of Ganu's mother.

Sri Ramakrishna was seated in the drawing-room of Ganu's mother's house. It was on the street floor. The room was used by a concert party. Several young men played on their instruments now and then for the pleasure of the Master.

It was eight-thirty in the evening. Moonlight flooded the streets, the houses, and the sky. It was the first day after the full moon.

The brahmani, who had also come, was visiting the drawing-room and the inner apartments alternately. Every few minutes she would come to the door of the drawing-room and look at the Master. Some youngsters from the neighbourhood also looked at him through the windows. The people of the locality, young and old, came thronging to see the saint.

The younger Naren saw the boys in the street climbing the windows. He said to them : " Why are you here ? Get away ! Go home ! " The Master said tenderly, " Let them stay." Every now and then he chanted : " Hari Om ! Hari Om ! "

The floor of the drawing-room was covered with a carpet. The young musicians sat on it and sang :

O Kesava, bestow Thy grace  
Upon Thy luckless servants here !  
O Kesava, who dost delight  
To roam Vrindavan's glades and groves ! . . .

MASTER : " Ah, how sweet the music is ! How melodious the violin is ! How good the accompaniments are ! (*Pointing to a boy*) He and the flutist seem to be a nice pair."

The orchestra went on playing. After it was over, Sri Ramakrishna said joyfully, " It is very fine indeed." Pointing to a young man, he said, " He seems to know how to play every instrument." He said to M., " They are all good people."

After the concert the young musician said to the devotees, " We should like to hear some of you sing." The brahmani stood near the door. She said : " None of them knows how to sing. Perhaps Mohin Babu can sing. But he will not sing before the Master."

A YOUNG MAN : " Why ? I can sing even before my father."

THE YOUNGER NAREN (*laughing*) : " But he has not yet advanced that far."

All laughed. A few minutes later the brahmani said to Sri Ramakrishna, " Please come inside."

MASTER : " Why ? "

BRAHMANI : " The refreshments are served there. Please come."

MASTER : " Why not bring them here ? "

BRAHMANI : " Ganu's mother requests you to bless the room with the dust of your feet. Then the room will be turned into Benares, and anyone dying in it will have no trouble hereafter."





MASTER : "Tell me what that hole is."

M : "You are that hole. Through you can be seen everything—that Infinite Meadow without any end."

Sri Ramakrishna was very much pleased. Patting M.'s back, he said : "I see you have understood that. That's fine !"

M : "It is indeed difficult to understand that. One cannot quite grasp how God, Perfect Brahman that He is, can dwell in that small body."

The Master quoted from a song :

Oh, no one at all has found out who He is ;  
Like a madman from door to door He roams,  
Like a poor beggar He roams from door to door.

M : "You also told us about Jesus."

MASTER : "What did I say ?"

M : "You went into samadhi at the sight of Jesus Christ's picture in Jadu Mallick's garden house. You saw Jesus come down from the picture and merge in your body."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent a few moments. Then he said to M. : "Perhaps there is a meaning in what has happened to my throat [referring to the sore in his throat]. This has happened lest I should make myself light before all ; lest I should go to all sorts of places and sing and dance."

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk about Dwija.

MASTER : "He didn't come today. Why ?"

M : "I asked him to come. He said he would. I don't know why he didn't."

MASTER : "He has great yearning. Well, he must be someone belonging to this.\* Isn't that so ?"

M : "Yes, sir, it must be so. Otherwise, how could he have such yearning ?"

Sri Ramakrishna lay down inside the mosquito curtain. M. fanned him. The Master turned on his side. He told M. how God incarnates Himself in a human body. He told him, further, about his, M.'s, spiritual ideal.

MASTER : "At the beginning I too passed through such states that I did not see divine forms. Even now I don't see them often."

M : "Among all the forms God chooses for His lila, I like best His play as a human being."

MASTER : "That is enough. And you are seeing me."

\* Meaning the circle of the Master's devotees.

## XLIV

### THE MASTER ON HIMSELF AND HIS EXPERIENCES

August 9, 1885

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA was sitting in his room at Dakshineswar. Rakhal, M., Dwija and his father, and other devotees were present. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

After returning from Vrindavan Rakhal had spent a few days at home. Now he was staying with the Master. Latu, Harish, and Ramlal were also staying at the temple garden.

Sri Ramakrishna was not well. It was the beginning of the illness subsequently diagnosed as the fatal cancer. But this did not disturb the serenity of his mind. Day and night he had only one thought, and that was the spiritual welfare of his disciples. He was guiding them toward the attainment of God. He encouraged them constantly to cultivate knowledge and devotion and warned them of the snares of "woman and gold". He was completely indifferent to his own illness and devoted himself whole-heartedly to the fulfilment of his earthly mission.

Dwija was about sixteen years old. After the death of his mother, his father had married a second time. Dwija often accompanied M. to Dakshineswar ; but his father did not approve of it.

Dwija's father had for a long time been speaking of visiting Sri Ramakrishna. Today he had come to Dakshineswar. He was the manager of a business firm in Calcutta and had passed his examination in law.

MASTER (to Dwija's father) : "Please don't mind your children's coming here.

"I ask people to live in the world after the awakening of their spiritual consciousness. After extracting gold through hard labour, a man may keep it under earth or in a box or under water. The gold is not affected.

"I ask people to live in the world in a spirit of detachment. If you break the jack-fruit after rubbing oil on your hands, its sticky juice will not smear them.

"If the 'unripe' mind dwells in the world, the mind gets soiled. One should first attain knowledge and then live in the world,

"If you put milk in water the milk is spoiled. But this will not happen if butter, churned from the milk, is put in water."

DWIJA'S FATHER : "That is true, sir."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "I know why you scold your children. You only threaten them. The brahmachari said to the snake : 'You are a fool indeed ! I forbade you to bite but not to hiss. Your enemies would not have beaten you, if only you had hissed at them.' Your scolding of the children is really a hissing. (*Dwija's father smiles.*)"

"A good son is an indication of his father's spiritual nature. If good water comes out when a reservoir is dug, it only indicates the virtue of the owner."

"A son is called Atmaja, 'the self reborn'. There is no difference between you and your son. In one way you yourself are reborn as your son. In one sense you are a worldly person, working in a business office and enjoying worldly life ; in another sense you are a devotee of God, in the form of your son. I heard that you were a very worldly person ; but now I find it isn't so. (*Smiling*) You know all this. I understand that you are very circumspect. Perhaps that is why you are nodding your assent to what I am saying. (*Dwija's father smiles.*)"

"If your children visit this place, they will be able to know what you really are. How precious one's father is ! If a person deceives his father and mother in order to seek religion, he gets only worthless trash."

"A man is born with several debts : debts to his father, the devas, and the rishis. Besides, there is his debt to his mother. He also has a debt to his wife. She must be supported. If the wife is chaste, the husband must provide for her after his death."

"I could not live at Vrindavan on account of my mother. When I remembered that my mother was living in the temple garden here at Dakshineswar, I could not feel peaceful at Vrindavan."

"I ask people to live in the world and at the same time fix their minds on God. I don't ask them to give up the world. I say, 'Fulfil your worldly duties and also think of God.'"

DWIJA'S FATHER : "I tell my children that they should attend to their studies. I don't forbid them to come to you, but I don't want them to waste time in frivolities with the youngsters."

MASTER (*referring to Dwija*) : "This boy must have been born with some good tendencies. Why are the two other brothers different from him ? Why is he alone spiritually minded ? Will you be able to compel him not to visit this place ? Sooner or later everyone unfolds his inborn tendencies."

DWIJA'S FATHER : "Yes, that is true."

Sri Ramakrishna came down from the couch and sat on the floor beside Dwija's father. While talking with him he touched him now and then.

It was nearly evening. Sri Ramakrishna asked M. and the others to show Dwija's father the temples. He said to them, "I should have accompanied him myself if I were well." He asked someone to give sweets to the young men and said to Dwija's father : "Let the children have a little refreshment."

It is customary." Dwija's father visited the temples and the images and took a stroll in the garden.

Sri Ramakrishna engaged happily in conversation with Bhupen, Dwija, M., and others on the southeast porch of his room. He playfully slapped Bhupen and M. on the back. He said to Dwija with a laugh. "How I talked to your father!"

Dwija's father returned to Sri Ramakrishna's room after dusk. He intended to leave shortly. He was feeling hot. Sri Ramakrishna fanned him himself. In a few minutes the father took leave of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna stood up to bid him farewell.

It was eight o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Mahimacharan, Rakhal, M., and one or two companions of Mahimacharan were in the room. Mahimacharan was going to spend the night at the temple garden.

MASTER (to Mahima): "Well, how do you find Kedar? Has he only seen milk, or has he drunk it too?"

MAHIMA: "Yes, he is enjoying bliss."

MASTER: "Nityagopal?"

MAHIMA: "Very good. He is in a lofty state of mind."

MASTER: "Yes. Well, what about Girish Ghosh?"

MAHIMA: "He too has developed nicely. But he belongs to another class."

MASTER: "And Narendra?"

MAHIMA: "He is now in the state I was in fifteen years ago."

MASTER: "The younger Naren? How guileless he is!"

MAHIMA: "Yes, quite guileless."

MASTER: "You are right. (*Reflecting a little*) Let me see who else. It will be sufficient for the youngsters who come here if they know only two things. If they know these, they will not have to practise much discipline and austerity. First, who I am, and second, who they are. Many of the youngsters belong to the inner circle.

"Those belonging to the inner circle will not attain liberation. I shall have to assume a human body again, in a northwesterly direction.

"I feel peace of mind when I see the youngsters. How can I feel joy at the sight of those who have begotten children and are engaged in lawsuits and are involved in 'woman and gold'? How could I live without seeing pure-souled persons?"

Mahimacharan recited some texts from the scriptures. He also described various mystic rites of the Tantra.

MASTER: "Well, some say that my soul, going into samadhi, flies about like a bird in the Mahakasa, the Infinite Space.

"Once a sadhu of Hrishikesh came here. He said to me: 'There are five kinds of samadhi. I find you have experienced them all. In these samadhis one feels the sensation of the Spiritual Current to be like the movement of an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird, or a serpent.'

"Sometimes the Spiritual Current rises through the spine, crawling like an ant.



"Sometimes, in samadhi, the soul swims joyfully in the ocean of divine ecstasy, like a fish.

"Sometimes, when I lie down on my side, I feel the Spiritual Current pushing me like a monkey and playing with me joyfully. I remain still. That Current, like a monkey, suddenly with one jump reaches the Sahasrara. That is why you see me jump up with a start.

"Sometimes, again, the Spiritual Current rises like a bird hopping from one branch to another. The place where it rests feels like fire. It may hop from Muladhara to Svadhisthana, from Svadhisthana to the heart, and thus gradually to the head.

"Sometimes the Spiritual Current moves up like a snake. Going in a zigzag way, at last it reaches the head and I go into samadhi.

"A man's spiritual consciousness is not awakened unless his Kundalini is aroused.

"The Kundalini dwells in the Muladhara. When it is aroused, it passes along the Sushumna nerve, goes through the centres of Svadhisthana, Manipura, and so on, and at last reaches the head. This is called the movement of the Mahavayu, the Spiritual Current. It culminates in samadhi.

"One's spiritual consciousness is not awakened by the mere reading of books. One should also pray to God. The Kundalini is aroused if the aspirant feels restless for God. To talk of Knowledge from mere study and hearsay! What will that accomplish?

"Just before my attaining this state of mind, it had been revealed to me how the Kundalini is aroused, how the lotuses of the different centres blossom forth, and how all this culminates in samadhi. This is a very secret experience. I saw a boy twenty-two or twenty-three years old, exactly resembling me, enter the Sushumna nerve and commune with the lotuses, touching them with his tongue. He began with the centre at the anus and passed through the centres at the sexual organ, navel, and so on. The different lotuses of those centres—four-petalled, six-petalled, ten-petalled, and so forth—had been drooping. At his touch they stood erect.

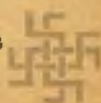
"When he reached the heart—I distinctly remember it—and communed with the lotus there, touching it with his tongue, the twelve-petalled lotus, which was hanging head down, stood erect and opened its petals. Then he came to the sixteen-petalled lotus in the throat and the two-petalled lotus in the forehead. And last of all, the thousand-petalled lotus in the head blossomed. Since then I have been in this state."

Sri Ramakrishna came down to the floor and sat near Mahima-charan. M. and a few other devotees were near him. Rakhal also was in the room.

MASTER (to Mahima): "For a long time I have wanted to tell you my spiritual experiences, but I could not. I feel like telling you today.

"You say that by mere sadhana one can attain a state of mind like mine. But it is not so. There is something special here [referring to himself]."

Rakhal, M., and the others became eager to hear what the Master was going to say.





MASTER : " God talked to me. It was not merely His vision. Yes, He talked to me. Under the banyan-tree I saw Him coming from the Ganges. Then we laughed so much ! By way of playing with me He cracked my fingers. Then He talked. Yes, He talked to me.

" For three days I wept continuously. And He revealed to me what is in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and the other scriptures.

" One day He showed me the maya of Mahamaya. A small light inside a room began to grow, and at last it enveloped the whole universe.

" Further, He revealed to me a huge reservoir of water covered with green scum. The wind moved a little of the scum and immediately the water became visible ; but in the twinkling of an eye, scum from all sides came dancing in and again covered the water. He revealed to me that the water was like Satchidananda, and the scum like maya. On account of maya, Satchidananda is not seen. Though now and then one may get a glimpse of It, again maya covers It.

" God reveals the nature of the devotees to me before they arrive. I saw Chaitanya's party singing and dancing near the Panchavati, between the banyan-tree and the bakul-tree. I noticed Balaram there. If it weren't for him, who would there be to supply me with sugar candy and such things ? (*Pointing to M.*) And I saw him too.

" I had seen Keshab before I actually met him—I had seen him and his party in my samadhi. In front of me sat a roomful of men. Keshab looked like a peacock sitting with its tail spread out. The tail meant his followers. I saw a red gem on Keshab's head. That indicated his rajās. He said to his disciples, ' Please listen to what he [meaning the Master] is saying.' I said to the Divine Mother : ' Mother, these people hold the views of " Englishmen ". Why should I talk to them ? ' Then the Mother explained to me that it would be like this in the Kaliyuga.

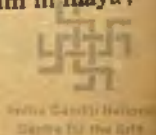
" Keshab and his followers got from here [meaning himself] the names of Hari and the Divine Mother. That is why the Divine Mother took Vijay away from Keshab's party. But Vijay did not join the Adi Samaj.<sup>1</sup>

(*Pointing to himself*) " There must be something special here. Long ago a young man named Gopal Sen used to visit me. He who dwells in me placed His foot on Gopal's chest. Gopal said in an ecstatic mood : ' You will have to wait here a long time. I cannot live any more with worldly people.' He took leave of me. Afterwards I heard that he was dead. Perhaps he was born as Nityagopal.

" I have had many amazing visions. I had a vision of the Indivisible Satchidananda. Inside It I saw two groups with a fence between them. On one side were Kedar, Chuni, and other devotees who believe in the Personal God. On the other side was a luminous space like a heap of red brick-dust. Inside it was seated Narendra immersed in samadhi. Seeing him absorbed in meditation, I called aloud, ' Oh, Narendra ! ' He opened his eyes a little. I came to realize that he had been born, in another form, in Simla<sup>2</sup> in a kayastha family. At once I said to the Divine Mother, ' Mother, entangle him in maya ;

<sup>1</sup> A sect of the Brahmo Samaj.

<sup>2</sup> The section of Calcutta in which Narendra was born.



otherwise he will give up his body in samadhi.' Kedar, a believer in the Personal God, peeped in and ran away with a shudder.

"Therefore I feel that it is the Divine Mother Herself who dwells in this body and plays with the devotees. When I first had my exalted state of mind, my body would radiate light. My chest was always flushed. Then I said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, do not reveal Thyself outwardly. Please go inside.' That is why my complexion is so dull now. If my body were still luminous, people would have tormented me; a crowd would always have thronged here. Now there is no outer manifestation. That keeps weeds away. Only genuine devotees will remain with me now. Do you know why I have this illness? It has the same significance. Those whose devotion to me has a selfish motive behind it will run away at the sight of my illness.

"I cherished a desire. I said to the Mother, 'O Mother, I shall be the king of the devotees.'

"Again, this thought arose in my mind: 'He who sincerely prays to God will certainly come here. He must.' You see, that is what is happening now. Only people of that kind come.

"My parents knew who dwells inside this body. Father had a dream at Gaya. In that dream Raghuvir said to him, 'I shall be born as your son.'

"God alone dwells inside this body. Such renunciation of 'woman and gold'! Could I have accomplished that myself? I have never enjoyed a woman, even in a dream.

"Nangta instructed me in Vedanta. In three days I went into samadhi. At the sight of my samadhi under the madhavi vine, he was quite taken aback and exclaimed, 'Ah! What is this?' Then he came to know who resides in this body. He said to me, 'Please let me go.' At these words of Totapuri, I went into an ecstatic mood and said, 'You cannot go till I realize the Truth of Vedanta.'

"Day and night I lived with him. We talked only Vedanta. The Brahmani used to say to me: 'Don't listen to Vedanta. It will injure your devotion to God.'

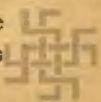
"I said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, please get me a rich man. If You don't, how shall I be able to protect this body? How shall I be able to keep the sadhus and devotees near me?' That is why Mathur Babu provided for my needs for fourteen years.

"He who dwells in me tells me beforehand what particular class of devotees will come to me. When I have a vision of Gauranga, I know that devotees of Gauranga are coming. When I have a vision of Kali, the Saktas come.

"At the time of the evening service I used to cry out from the roof of the kuthi, weeping: 'Oh, where are you all? Come to me!' You see, they are all gathering here, one by one.

"God Himself dwells in this body. It is He who, of His own accord, is working with these devotees.

"What a wonderful state of mind some of the devotees have! The younger Naren gets kumbhaka without any effort, and samadhi too. Sometimes





he stays in an ecstatic mood for two and a half hours ; sometimes even more. How wonderful !

"I have practised all kinds of sadhana : jnanayoga, karmayoga, and bhaktiyoga. I have even gone through the exercises of hathayoga to increase longevity. There is another Person dwelling in this body. Otherwise, after attaining samadhi, how could I live with the devotees and enjoy the love of God ? Koar Singh used to say to me : 'I have never before seen a person who has returned from the plane of samadhi. You are none other than Nanak.'

"I live in the midst of worldly people ; on all sides I see 'woman and gold'. Nevertheless, this is the state of my mind : unceasing samadhi and bhava. That is the reason Pratap<sup>3</sup> said, at the sight of my ecstatic mood : 'Good heavens ! It is as if he were possessed by a ghost !'"

Rakhal, M., and the others were speechless as they drank in this account of Sri Ramakrishna's unique experiences.

But did Mahimacharan understand the import of these words ? Even after hearing them, he said to the Master, "These things have happened to you on account of your meritorious actions in your past births." Mahima still thought that Sri Ramakrishna was a sadhu or a devotee of God. The Master nodded assent to Mahima's words and said : "Yes, the result of past actions. God is like an aristocrat who has many mansions. Here [referring to himself] is one of His drawing-rooms. The bhakta is God's drawing-room."

It was nine o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch. It was Mahimacharan's desire to form a brahmachakra<sup>4</sup> in the presence of the Master. Mahima formed a circle, on the floor, with Rakhal, M., Kishori, and one or two other devotees. He asked them all to meditate. Rakhal went into an ecstatic state. The Master came down from the couch and placed his hand on Rakhal's chest, repeating the name of the Divine Mother. Rakhal regained consciousness of the outer world.

It was one o'clock in the morning, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the moon. There was intense darkness everywhere. One or two devotees were pacing the concrete embankment of the Ganges. Sri Ramakrishna was up. He came out and said to the devotees, "Nangta told me that at this time, about midnight, one hears the Anahata sound."

In the early hours of the morning Mahimacharan and M. lay down on the floor of the Master's room. Rakhal slept on a camp cot. Now and then Sri Ramakrishna paced up and down the room with his clothes off, like a five-year-old child.

*Monday, August 10*

It was dawn. The Master was chanting the name of the Divine Mother. He went to the porch west of his room and looked at the Ganges ; then he stopped in front of the pictures of different gods and goddesses in the room and bowed to them. The devotees left their beds, saluted Sri Ramakrishna, and went out.

<sup>3</sup> Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, a distinguished member of the Brahmo Samaj.

<sup>4</sup> A mystic circle prescribed in Tantra.